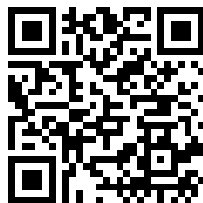

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DOCUMENTS ON BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY 1919-1939

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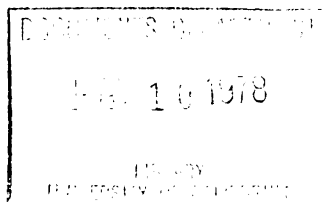
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DOCUMENTS ON BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

1919-1939

Second Series, Volume XVI

**The Rhineland Crisis and the Ending of Sanctions
March 2 – July 30, 1936**

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Main

PREFACE

THE two main themes of the documents printed in this volume are the final stage of the Italo-Ethiopian struggle from March to July 1936, and the fresh international crisis created on March 7 by the German Government's decision to re-militarize the Rhineland. The collapse of Ethiopian military resistance in April, followed by the flight of the Emperor Haile Selassie, led fairly speedily, if not very amicably, to the calling off of sanctions and the formal reconciliation of the Italian Government with the League of Nations on July 4, whereas Germany showed no alacrity in moves to reassure her Locarno partners. The documents relating to these two topics are printed chronologically in Chapters I-V of this volume. German and Italian intransigence was partly balanced by the good behaviour of the Turkish Government in seeking revision of the Straits convention of 1923 by agreement at the Montreux Conference. This is the subject of Chapter VI. The negotiation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, signed on August 26, also falls largely within this period.

In the main issues of Western European diplomacy British foreign policy proceeded step by step, if not always eye to eye, with that of France. The 'Hoare-Laval' agreement of December 8, 1935, could be regarded as an ill-judged attempt by the British and French foreign ministers to reconcile their divergences of attitude towards Italy's Ethiopian adventure. After its failure the divergences tended to increase, for Mr. Eden, the new British Foreign Secretary, was unresponsive to French proposals for another Anglo-French initiative in the struggle, while M. Flandin, who succeeded M. Laval as French Foreign Minister on January 24, was increasingly alarmed at the continuation of Franco-Italian tension, which he regarded as an open invitation to German aggression. The British had their own ideas about the treatment of Germany, and these too were of little comfort to the French. Early in February the Cabinet had accepted Mr. Eden's view that it would be well to seek a *modus vivendi* with Germany in order to gain time for British rearmament and perhaps give German expansionist fervour some outlet, consistent with the ultimate goal of disarmament and genuine *détente*. Details of the resulting Cabinet and departmental discussions were printed in Volume XV of this Series, e.g. documents Nos. 493, 509, 521, 522, 524, and Appendix IV. Some inkling of the British attitude towards the German problem had certainly reached the Quai d'Orsay before the end of February.

Accordingly there was a sharp clash of argument on March 2 and 3 at Geneva, where the British and French delegates had assembled for a meeting of the League Committee of Eighteen. M. Flandin seemed shocked to hear that the British Cabinet had agreed on February 26 to support the oil sanction against Italy, and retorted that in view of Signor Mussolini's recent

warning that the extension of sanctions would mean war, Italy's withdrawal from the League, and the denunciation of the Franco-Italian (Badoglio-Gamelin) military understanding, the French Government could not agree to the embargo. He suggested an appeal to the belligerents to start peace negotiations. The verbatim records of the two important Anglo-French conversations of March 2 and 3 (Nos. 3, 20) show Mr. Eden under fierce pressure. Whether, as had been suggested, he was overborne by M. Flandin in agreeing to the peace move depends on the extent to which he wished to give priority to the oil sanction. He apparently did not expect it to be particularly effective, but thought that the League would look ridiculous if it did nothing; on the other hand, he admitted that he would deplore Italy's departure from Geneva. He was evidently aware of, and determined to prevent, any attempt to use the appeal to the belligerents as a means either of dropping the oil sanction or of postponing it indefinitely. But very little time was expected to be lost by the appeal; and he agreed that M. Flandin should propose to the Committee of Eighteen on March 2 a call to the two parties to negotiate, on the understanding that if no reply were received after about 48 hours the Committee of Thirteen should meet to decide about an oil embargo. The Committee of Thirteen was in any event to meet again on March 10.

But French agreement to the oil embargo remained in doubt, and M. Flandin was annoyed when Mr. Eden told the Committee of Eighteen that his government were in favour of it and prepared to join in (No. 6). He felt that he must make this proposal in order to dissociate himself from the French refusal, although to do so was against the original intention of the Cabinet (No. 3, note 11). M. Flandin's reaction to this was to present Mr. Eden next day with a written statement that as the imposition of the oil embargo might precipitate Italian action which would open the way for a German reoccupation of the Rhineland, France must be reassured as to the British attitude towards this eventuality before agreement to the oil sanction. Mr. Eden could only say in reply that this was clearly a matter on which he must consult his colleagues (No. 11).

The documentation in the remainder of Chapter I makes it evident that M. Flandin's approach to the Rhineland question was decidedly embarrassing to the British Cabinet, for though he had promised that in the event of a German coup France would not act alone and would take action with her Locarno partners through the League of Nations he had also said that the French Government would reserve the right to take preliminary measures of a military character (No. 12). The effect was to strengthen the Cabinet's anxiety to avoid another violent Nazi treaty-breaking gesture by concluding a direct agreement with Germany. At a special meeting on the evening of March 5 it agreed to Mr. Eden's proposal that he should follow up as quickly as possible the approach that he had already made to Germany on February 27 (No. 29, note 3). He did see Herr von Hoesch, the German Ambassador, on March 6, and referred to an air pact as a suitable first step towards a general improvement of international relations in Western Europe (No. 29).

But clearly this approach, to have any chance of success, should have been made much earlier. The march of German troops into the Rhineland, which had already been decided on in Berlin, was announced next morning.

Mr. Eden's important paper of March 8 (No. 48) leaves no doubt that the Cabinet's main reaction was one of fresh irritation at Nazi methods rather than of any acute apprehension over the new military situation. He remarked that it was 'the manner of their action . . . which we deplore', and he admitted that in proposing the air pact to Herr von Hoesch on March 6 he had had in mind the surrender (on conditions) of Anglo-French rights in the Rhineland as a counter-concession. Now, 'by reoccupying the Rhineland [Herr Hitler] has deprived us of the possibility of making to him a concession which might otherwise have been a useful bargaining counter in our hands in the general negotiations with Germany which we had it in contemplation to initiate. Such negotiations are now inevitable, but we shall enter them at a disadvantage . . .' But he noted on the positive side that Germany had offered a wide range of suggestions for a new 'system of peaceful security in Europe'. Part III of the paper defined future policy, arguing that although it was now evident that Germany would repudiate inconvenient treaties whenever she felt strong enough to do so it was nevertheless 'in our interest to conclude with her as far-reaching and enduring a settlement as possible whilst Herr Hitler is still in the mood to do so'. Any condemnation of her action by the League Council should be accepted only 'on the distinct understanding that it were not followed by a French attack on Germany and a request for our armed assistance'.

British policy was governed by the conviction of both the Cabinet and the Foreign Office that until the completion of the new rearmament programme, outlined by the Prime Minister in presenting Command Paper No. 5107 on Defence to the House of Commons on March 9, an adventurous foreign policy was precluded. But this attitude was facilitated by the absence of any decisive popular criticism of German action comparable with the anti-Italian feeling of 1935. The Foreign Office archives do not offer any comprehensive survey of British public opinion in the Rhineland crisis, but there are some interesting pointers. The sentiment of the City, as shown in a remarkable series of confidential letters from Mr. Nigel Law, was reported to be 'overwhelmingly pro-German' on March 9, less so but still anti-French three days later: leading Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to remark that whenever he was tempted 'toward optimism in regard to human wisdom, a little synopsis of City opinion has a markedly stabilising effect' (No. 79; cf. Nos. 55, 186, 206, 280). All the same, many people in all walks of life seemed to be saying that the German should be allowed to do what he liked in his own back garden.

A third factor was a surviving flicker of hope among the officials that Herr Hitler could yet be brought to an agreement, although they usually greeted the enthusiasms of the more dedicated advocates of Anglo-German collaboration with an air of resigned scepticism. This was certainly the reaction to Professor Arnold Toynbee's comment on March 8 that 'any response from

the English side to his overtures for our friendship would produce an enormous counter-response to us from Hitler' (No. 56). Advice from Geneva (No. 122, note 3), Blickling Hall (No. 56), and even the economic section of the Foreign Office (No. 463), was to the effect that the situation did indeed offer, in the words of *The Times*, 'A Chance to Rebuild' (March 9). On March 9, on Mr. Eden's suggestion, Mr. Baldwin appointed an inter-departmental committee under the chairmanship of the Earl of Plymouth to consider the possible transfer of a colonial mandate to Germany (No. 50). 'Miracles' commented Sir R. Vansittart drily on March 17, 'do still come about, and we must continue to hope and work for one, for a miracle is only another form of long odds.' But he could see at this point no sign from Germany 'of more than that ephemeral sincerity of which we have all along recognised Hitler to be capable' (No. 121).

The Cabinet's acceptance of Mr. Eden's propositions of March 8 led to uneasy, and, at times, acrimonious exchanges between the French and British governments during the following weeks. Mr. Eden was authorized to tell Parliament on March 9 that the British Government would regard themselves in honour bound to come to the assistance of France or Belgium if attacked (No. 48, note 22). The Cabinet was satisfied that the French did not propose, as the German General Staff was said to fear (No. 52, note 2), to drive the German troops out of the Rhineland by force. But it was not prepared to accede to the French demand in Paris on March 10 for overt measures by the League of Nations in condemnation of German action which would signify 'the restoration of international law'. The French wanted the German evacuation of the Rhineland, enforced by the League with the threat of economic, financial, and if necessary military sanctions (No. 63). These 'overt measures' constituted the essential point of difference between the British and French positions. The British were prepared to join in a public condemnation of the German action, but wished thereafter to follow a 'constructive policy' of negotiation 'to re-establish the European situation'. They were not prepared to support M. Flandin's demand for a temporary retirement of the German reoccupying forces. Chapter II describes in detail the resulting discussions from March 12 to 25 in London, where it had been decided that the League Council should meet to hear the complaints of the four remaining Locarno powers against Germany.

In London on March 12 for the Council meeting, M. Flandin said that after the sanctity of treaties had been vindicated 'the Germans could come back into the demilitarized zone' (No. 78). The Council meetings started on March 14, and it was agreed that Germany should be invited to attend to state her case; in the meantime Mr. Eden and M. van Zeeland, the Belgian Prime Minister, had agreed that a middle course must be found between the French and British positions (No. 69). Proposals to this end were made by the Foreign Office on March 15, based on an earlier draft by M. van Zeeland. They included a condemnation of Germany's action, reference to arbitration of the question of the compatibility of the Franco-Soviet pact with Locarno, an international force to be stationed on either side of the

frontier, and the suspension meanwhile by all three countries of military activity in the frontier zones. M. Flandin took these proposals very badly. They were, he told Mr. Eden on March 17, impregnated with the unjust assimilation of guilt and innocence; his mission to London had been a failure; he would leave London on the 19th and not return (No. 119; cf. Nos. 120, 123, 131, 134). Nevertheless it was the British programme, suitably elaborated, which formed the basis of the proposals for the liquidation of the crisis drawn up by the representatives of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy on March 19, with a British promise of immediate military assistance to France and Belgium in accordance with the treaty of Locarno if the need arose (No. 144).

It seems evident that as soon as the danger of a military counter-move by the French had passed the German Government lost all interest in the constructive counter-proposals for European settlement which it had put forward with such a flourish on March 7. But the process of talking out the crisis, or as Bismarck would have said, drowning it in ink, continued in discussions around the theme of a new Locarno agreement, and they were to continue indeed for the remainder of the year and beyond. The German Government, after declining to accept the three specific measures asked of it on March 19—reference to the Hague Court, agreement to an international force, abstention from works of fortification—promised that the Chancellor would shortly produce ‘a final and important document which might enable us to co-operate to settle the problems of the European continent for all time’ (No. 163). This peace plan was set out under 19 sub-headings in a document delivered by Herr von Ribbentrop on April 1. On the immediate issues there was nothing more than a promise not to strengthen Germany’s military position in the Rhineland for four months. For the more remote future, however, it expansively offered 25-year non-aggression pacts in Western Europe, Germany’s re-entry of the League of Nations (with the expectation of a clearing-up of the colonial question), an international court of arbitration, the regulation of armaments, humanization of war, and a good deal more. As the French Government rightly insisted in a point-by-point rebuttal of the German document on April 10, the German contribution to peace was ‘more apparent than real’. French counter-principles for the guaranteeing of European peace followed (see Introductory Note to Chapter III).

It was to no government’s advantage that the discussions should come to a dead halt: but as M. Massigli (of the French Foreign Office) conceded on March 16, it would be to his government’s advantage if the Hague Court or other procedure were adopted, thus delaying negotiations until June, well after the forthcoming French elections. Sir R. Vansittart agreed next day: ‘We cannot and must not be hurried if we are to succeed’ (No. 114). In his case the argument seems to have been that negotiations for the general settlement which the British still desired would be impossible without French participation, which the French political situation made impossible before June. On March 29 M. Flandin in a speech at Vézelay suggested

putting a number of questions to Herr Hitler about his intentions (No. 188), and this idea was taken up by Mr. Eden and resulted in the preparation and presentation of a questionnaire by the British Government, a process which ensured the postponement of any further meeting of the Locarno powers (Nos. 269, 277, 283, 291, 304). It is evident that some members of the British Cabinet (cf. Appendix I) hoped that the questionnaire might, if tactfully worded, produce a *détente* in Anglo-German differences of sufficient duration to provide time for British rearmament. There were others (particularly in the Foreign Office) who feared that conciliatory language might encourage fresh German claims. The result was a document of compromise wording, which was not presented to the German Foreign Minister, Baron von Neurath, until May 7 (Nos. 299, 301, 306, 307, 310). For practical purposes, this was the end of the matter. The delivery of a reply to the questions was continually postponed (Nos. 323, 325, 328, 336, 340, 357, 363, 369, 370), until in a Reichstag speech of January 30 1937 Herr Hitler finally buried the issue.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian resistance had collapsed. The Rhineland crisis was an obvious obstacle to a more vigorous sanctions programme in her support. At the Paris meeting of the four Locarno Powers on March 10 the Italian delegate had made it clear that as Italy was a state subject to sanctions he could not agree in advance to any action of a political, economic, or military character against Germany (No. 63). The meeting of the Committee of Thirteen, due for March 10, was postponed until March 23. Plans to bring the two contestants together for peace talks were then discussed (No. 158), but these had made no progress when the Emperor suffered his decisive defeat in battle near Quoram a week later (No. 181). There were still hopes in some quarters that Ethiopia would be saved by the onset of the rainy season, but as Sir R. Vansittart commented (No. 246) on April 17: 'It has got to rain *very* hard—and *very quick*—and *very long*!' By this stage the Foreign Office had accepted the view that any further extension of sanctions was impracticable (No. 235) but that help might still be given to Ethiopia in the form of facilities or supplies (No. 235). M. de Vasconcellos, the Portuguese chairman of the Committee of Eighteen, also thought the addition of new sanctions to be impracticable, but favoured the continuance of the existing programme in the interest of Abyssinian morale (No. 247). On May 4 the Emperor left Jibouti on board H.M.S. *Enterprise* (No. 295). For a few days, until Italian troops marched into Addis Ababa on May 5, order was maintained in the capital by the British legion guard, mainly Punjabis (Nos. 300, 308).

During the next few weeks the stark failure of Anglo-French pressure on both Italy and Germany was reflected in the gloomy tone of Foreign Office minuting, from which ideas about a new phase of British diplomatic activity emerged rather slowly. An interview and some shouting by the Führer on May 14 convinced Sir E. Phipps and the Foreign Office that Germany did not intend yet awhile to answer the questions or proceed to the carrying out of the ambitious programmes of March 7 and 31 (No. 325). The note of exasperation is very strong in the minutes at this point (Nos. 328, note 3,

339, note 2). But it was felt that Germany's offhand attitude was partly due to the continuance of Anglo-Italian tension and by the end of May the officials were in favour of the speedy removal of sanctions, although Mr. Eden clearly found any hasty settlement with Italy distasteful (No. 343, note 2).

However, he laid it down on June 3 that the aim must continue to be a general agreement between Britain, France, and Germany rather than the Anglo-German agreement which was believed to be Herr Hitler's sole interest. The occasion clearly called for some thorough reassessment of British policy and this was provided as far as Italy was concerned in two important Cabinet papers, both dated June 11. Mr. Eden, much impressed by the need to do something to restore 'our prestige and power in the Mediterranean', had been attracted for some time by plans for an agreement with Greece and Turkey which would at least lead to the obtaining of valuable facilities for the British fleet. But the proposal evidently alarmed Sir R. Vansittart, who argued on June 4 that there could be 'no Mediterranean security from which France and Italy are excluded'. In the Cabinet memorandum, C.P. 165(36) of June 11, alternative methods of restoring the British position in the Mediterranean were surveyed, and the unwisdom of a Mediterranean pact without France and Italy duly stressed. On the other hand, it was recognized that although 'some sort of Mediterranean pact' including France and Italy might help later to promote a general *détente* it could not be regarded as practicable for the time being. In his other Cabinet paper, C.P. 159(36), Mr. Eden recommended that the British Government should take the lead in proposing the raising of sanctions (No. 360), and the Cabinet, which had already been prodded in this direction by Mr. Neville Chamberlain's 'midsummer madness' speech (or popular misunderstandings of it) of June 10 (No. 362), agreed on the 17th to a House of Commons declaration on the point. The League of Nations Assembly, after receiving on June 30 a conciliatory letter from Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, agreed on July 4 to recommend the abandonment of the sanctions measures (Nos. 390, 392).

But the Foreign Office could draw no comfort from the German attitude during June, although it saw little advantage in hastening a showdown (No. 369). The Plymouth Committee in its report of June 9 virtually rejected any transfer of mandates to Germany as either impracticable or undesirable, and both Mr. Eden and Sir R. Vansittart now agreed that they must abandon their earlier hope of a colonial transfer as a means of promoting a durable European settlement (Appendix III, note 22).

In the absence of any alternative procedure M. van Zeeland's proposal on June 30 (No. 393) of an early meeting of the Locarno powers was quite warmly received in London. The object would not be to register the failure of earlier pressure on Germany but to 'offer Herr Hitler a new chance of cooperation which M. van Zeeland thought it ten to one latter would accept'. The German Government decided that the 'time and atmosphere were not yet ripe for such a conference' (No. 417), and referred to Italy, and the Italian Government thought that the position following sanctions was

not quite cleared up and referred to Germany (No. 436). But a meeting of the three remaining Locarno powers did take place on July 23 and was made possible by the tacit agreement of the new French Government under M. Blum not to insist on the various concessions in the Rhineland that M. Flandin had demanded in March. A full record of the conversations is printed below (Nos. 476, 477). The result was an invitation to Germany and Italy to a meeting of the five Locarno powers to negotiate a new agreement to take the place of the Rhine Pact of Locarno, with the suggestion that if progress could be made under this head they might look forward to the widening of the area of discussion to facilitate a general settlement essential to the peace of Europe. We leave the story at this point with Germany considering her reply, not unamiably but with no appearance of urgency.

Finally Chapter VI prints the relevant British documents relating to the conference called by Turkey at Montreux on June 22 to revise the Lausanne Convention of 1923, under which she could not fortify or garrison the Straits. The background is sketched in the Introductory Note to this chapter on pp. 656-7. With so much talk of treaty revision in the air it was not surprising that Turkey should raise the matter, but there was an added and genuine note of urgency in her argument that as Italy had strongly fortified her islands in the Dodecanese she might be contemplating a seizure of the Straits, in order to protect her oil supplies from the Black Sea (No. 489). Although Mr. Eden considered this possibility remote he wanted to avoid any precipitate Turkish action and readily agreed in principle on April 16 to a conference. When it assembled there was no opposition to Turkey's basic demand, but some of the consequent technical problems were knotty, and certain proposed provisions, which were really due to the desire of the French, Soviet, and Rumanian Governments to exclude Germany and her pocket battleships, brought fears of deadlock (No. 533). A solution, which the British Government did not particularly like, was found in a provision excluding belligerent warships from the Straits altogether in time of war when Turkey was neutral (No. 539). The Turkish Government showed throughout its desire to strengthen ties with Great Britain, while nervous of giving offence to the Soviet Union, and apprehensive about Italy. Use has been made in this connection of the private papers of Sir Percy Loraine.

The conditions under which the Editors accepted the task of producing this Collection, namely, access to all papers in the Foreign Office archives and freedom of selection and arrangement of documents, continue to be fulfilled. I have to thank Mr. B. Cheeseman, O.B.E., the Head of the Library and Records Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and his staff, for all requisite facilities. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Public Record Office for the service they provide. And I am indebted to Mrs. Gillian Bennett, M.A., for her help at every stage in the preparation of this volume for publication, and for nearly all the work on Chapter VI.

August 1976

W. N. MEDLICOTT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A.C.M.* *Actes de la Conférence de Montreux concernant le régime des Détroits* (Paris, 1936).
- A.T.B.* Advisory (Committee) on Trade and Blockade Questions in Time of War.
- B.F.S.P.* *British and Foreign State Papers* (London).
- Cmd.* Command Paper (London).
- D.D.B.* *Documents Diplomatiques Belges 1920-40* (Brussels).
- D.D.F.* *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1932-1939* (Paris).
- D.G.F.P.* *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945* (London).
- D.R.C.* Defence Requirements Committee.
- F.R.U.S.* *Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington).
- H.C. Deb. 5 s.* *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), Official Report, 5th Series, House of Commons* (London).
- H.L. Deb. 5 s.* *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), Official Report, 5th Series, House of Lords* (London).
- L/N.O.J.* *League of Nations Official Journal* (Geneva).
- L/N.O.J., S.S.* *League of Nations Official Journal, Special Supplement* (Geneva).

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CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER I

Consideration of plans for an oil embargo and a negotiated settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute: German remilitarization of the Rhineland: first reactions thereto
March 2-11, 1936

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
	1936		
1 To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 60	Mar. 2	Rejects suggestion by <i>The Times</i> Washington correspondent that League member states are less exacting than the U.S. Govt. in prohibiting credits for oil exports to Italy.	1
2 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 14 Saving	Mar. 2	Mr. Eden recounts M. Pouritch's comments on attitude of M. Flandin toward oil sanction, which he ascribes to French fear of Italian denunciation of the Badooglio-Gamelin agreement.	2
3 MR. EDMOND Geneva No. 17	Mar. 2	Encloses record of Anglo-French conversation at Geneva.	2
4 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Mar. 2	Note on the Air Pact for the Cabinet Committee on Germany.	8
5 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Mar. 2	Note for the Cabinet Committee on Germany on the possibility of further limitation of land armaments.	12
6 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 15 L.N.	Mar. 3	Mr. Eden describes agreement with MM. Flandin and Avenol concerning procedure for discussion of oil sanction at forthcoming meeting of Committee of 18.	15
7 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 16 L.N.	Mar. 3	Mr. Eden's account of conversation with M. Potemkine; Soviet Govt. is prepared to follow Anglo-French lead over oil sanction.	16
8 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 124	Mar. 3	Refers to No. 2 and suggests means to meet Signor Mussolini's objection to negotiations under pressure.	17
9 To SIR E. OVEY Brussels No. 114	Mar. 3	Recounts conversation between M. de Lantsheere and Mr. Sargent concerning the demilitarized zone, and M. Flandin's pressure for an early statement as to the Belgian Govt.'s attitude thereto.	17
10 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 19 L.N.	Mar. 4	Mr. Eden reports conversation of Mar. 3 with M. Flandin who mentioned French plans to meet a German violation of	20

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		demilitarized zone, and commented on other aspects of Franco-German relations.	
11 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 21 L.N.	Mar. 4	In conversation with Mr. Eden on Mar. 3 M. Flandin stressed need for Anglo-French co-operation in case Ethiopia and Italy failed to respond to appeal to open negotiations, and expressed fears of denunciation of the Badoglio-Gamelin agreement.	21
12 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 23 L.N.	Mar. 4	Mr. Eden transmits statement from M. Flandin concerning proposed attitude of French Govt. in face of German violation of articles 42 and 43 of Versailles Treaty.	22
13 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 26	Mar. 4	Forwards text of message sent by Committee of 13 to Italy and Ethiopia appealing for the opening of negotiations.	23
14 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 25 L.N.	Mar. 4	Mr. Eden describes discussions with M. Flandin leading to formulation of text forwarded in No. 13.	23
15 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 44	Mar. 4	Reports great German interest in latest move over sanctions at Geneva.	24
16 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 17 Saving	Mar. 4	Gives text of tel. No. 1 from Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton describing and commenting on recent developments at Geneva with regard to oil embargo and plea to belligerents to open negotiations.	25
17 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 43 Saving	Mar. 4	Reports exuberant talk by Herr Hitler as to Germany's growing immunity from sanctions.	27
18 MR. O'MALLEY Foreign Office	Mar. 4	Minute on Franco-Italian military conversations.	27
19 MR. ASHTON-GWATKIN Foreign Office	Mar. 4	Minute examining possible bases of an economic agreement with Germany: notes objections to each, but suggests that proposals for general European collaboration might be more fruitful.	28
20 MR. EDMOND Geneva No. 18	Mar. 4	Forwards full minutes of Anglo-French conversations at noon on Mar. 3, as summarized in No. 6.	29
21 MR. EDMOND Geneva No. 19	Mar. 4	Forwards record of the meeting of the Committee of 13 at Geneva on Mar. 3 at 3.30 p.m.	33
22 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 101	Mar. 5	Reports ratification on Mar. 4 of Franco-Soviet pact by Foreign Affairs Commission of French Senate.	34
23 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 48	Mar. 6	Reports that M. François-Poncet has not yet received any proposals from the German Chancellor.	35
24 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 49	Mar. 6	Reports a summons to see Baron von Neurath next morning: rumours of forthcoming German action in regard to Locarno.	35

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
25	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 87	Mar. 6	Refers to No. 16: he has spoken as suggested: Ethiopian reply to Committee of 13's proposals despatched on Mar. 5.	35
26	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 134	Mar. 6	Gives an account of a conversation between M. de Chambrun and Signor Mussolini on Mar. 5 discussing terms of Italian reply to Committee of 13's proposals.	36
27	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 51	Mar. 6	Reports discussions among German military authorities regarding demilitarized zone.	38
28	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 135	Mar. 6	Refers to No. 26 and suggests that Mr. Eden should assure Signor Grandi that he welcomed Signor Mussolini's apparently co-operative disposition and that no one in Great Britain desires to humiliate Signor Mussolini.	38
29	To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 35	Mar. 6	Records conversation with Herr von Hoesch as to the possibility of a general improvement of international relations in Western Europe, and suggests conclusion of air pact between five Locarno powers as a first step. <i>Note 3.</i> Summary of Cabinet discussion on Mar. 5.	39
30	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 136	Mar. 6	Suggests that, if Italian attitude makes postponement of Committee of 18's activity over oil sanction possible, this should be proposed by British delegate in interest of improved Anglo-Italian relations.	41
31	To SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa No. 65	Mar. 6	Ethiopian Minister presents Emperor's wish for British instead of Italian advisers and his suggestion that Abyssinia should become a British Dominion: is told that these proposals are inconceivable.	41
32	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 52	Mar. 7	Refers to No. 29: considering it essential that Herr Hitler should receive the message contained therein before his Reichstag speech at midday he took text to Baron von Neurath's private house at 9 a.m.	43
33	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 53	Mar. 7	Reports that he has just been handed German memo. connected with German military occupation of demilitarized Rhineland zone: says effect on H.M.G. will be lamentable.	43
34	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 54	Mar. 7	Reports discussion of No. 33 with Baron von Neurath who was most embarrassed: quotes information from private source that final military discussion about occupation took place only on Mar. 6.	44
35	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 56	Mar. 7	Reports message from Consul-General in Cologne on German troop movements.	44

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
36	SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 14	Mar. 7	Reports that no Belgian mobilization has been ordered, but leave for frontier troops has been stopped: Belgian Govt. are anxious to hear views of London and Paris.	45
37	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 42	Mar. 7	States that he has discussed German action in demilitarized zone with M. Corbin, and described German action as deplorable in interview that morning with Herr von Hoesch: thinks nonetheless that accompanying German offer has one or two important points.	45
38	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 140	Mar. 7	Reports a conversation with Signor Suvich as to the conditions for successful negotiations between Italy and Ethiopia.	46
39	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 108	Mar. 7	Reports M. Flandin's reaction to German action in Rhineland and his wish for a meeting of Locarno powers in Paris on Mar. 9 followed by reference to Geneva.	47
40	SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 15	Mar. 7	Reports that M. van Zeeland favours early meeting of Locarno powers and reference of Rhineland question to Geneva as proposed by M. Flandin.	49
41	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 109	Mar. 7	Reports press statement on French intentions following remilitarization of Rhineland zone.	49
42	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 301	Mar. 7	Says Herr von Hoesch in interview that morning made two communications (a) announcing German Govt.'s agreement on age of battleships and willingness to sign naval agreement, (b) presenting memo. justifying German Govt.'s action in the Rhineland: has told German Ambassador that he deeply regretted unilateral repudiation of a treaty freely negotiated. <i>Encl.: Translation of German Memo. of Mar. 7, 1936.</i>	50
43	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 286	Mar. 7	Comments on, and disagrees with main premise of, memo. of Jan. 31, 1936, respecting German expansion.	55
44	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 27 L.N.	Mar. 8	Mr. Jebb reports that oil experts committee has now dealt satisfactorily with all technical problems connected with immediate imposition of an oil embargo.	56
45	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 12	Mar. 8	Reports that M. Beck has informed French Ambassador of Polish Govt.'s wish to remain in close contact with French Govt. in this grave moment.	57
46	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 110	Mar. 8	Forwards Military Attaché's report on military preparations carried out by French General Staff in last twenty-four hours.	57
47	SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 16	Mar. 8	States his strong conviction that M. van Zeeland will willingly follow H.M.G.'s lead in any reasonable policy.	58

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
48	MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Mar. 8	Memo. for the Cabinet on Germany and the Locarno Treaty.	59
49	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 432	Mar. 8	In reply to M. Corbin's message that morning from M. Flandin proposing meeting of Locarno powers on Monday afternoon, Mr. Eden explains that Monday afternoon is impossible for him and that in any case he prefers a meeting at Geneva. <i>Note 2.</i> Refers to tel. No. 48 of Mar. 8 to Paris: Mr. Eden agrees to meeting in Paris on Mar. 10.	67
50	MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Mar. 8	Letter to Mr. Baldwin referring to German memo. and suggesting three aspects requiring early consideration by competent committees. <i>Note 5.</i> Note saying that this led to the setting-up of a sub-committee of C.I.D. under Lord Plymouth to examine German colonial claims.	68
51	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 114	Mar. 9	Reports official <i>communiqué</i> declaring German memo. unacceptable and announcing Govt. decision to inform the League accordingly.	70
52	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 63	Mar. 9	Reports statement by German Ministry of War that movement of German troops into Rhineland was completed on Mar. 8.	70
53	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 64	Mar. 9	Reports that Berlin press is conveying impression that London newspapers enthusiastically welcome German entry into demilitarized zone.	71
54	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 50	Mar. 9	Message for Mr. Eden that Dominion High Commissioners in London entirely approve his statement to House of Commons that day.	71
55	MR. LAW	Mar. 9	Letter to Mr. Sargent describing favourable reaction of the City to recent German conduct.	71
56	MR. T. JONES	Mar. 9	Forwards in a letter to Mr. Eden an account by Professor A. J. Toynbee of his interview with Herr Hitler on Feb. 28, 1936.	73
57	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 142	Mar. 10	Reports conversation with Signor Suvich on Italian attitude towards German action in Rhineland.	77
58	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 69	Mar. 10	Reports Berlin press reactions to Mr. Eden's speech of Mar. 9.	78
59	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 51	Mar. 10	Message from Sir R. Vansittart for Mr. Eden discussing procedure in the light of German Govt.'s intention to put its case to the League Council.	79

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
60	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 53	Mar. 10	From Sir R. Vansittart for Mr. Eden, reporting information that moderate circles in Germany opposed reoccupation of demilitarized zone.	80
61	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 122	Mar. 10	From Mr. Eden, recording an informal discussion with Belgian, French and Italian Ministers on Mar. 10 on probable German reaction to threat of military sanctions.	80
62	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 123	Mar. 10	Mr. Eden recommends to H.M.G. postponement of Committee of 13 meeting, with invitations to Locarno powers and to League Council to meet in London. <i>Note 4.</i> Text of telegram from Secretary-General inviting League Council to meet in London on Mar. 14.	81
63	QUAI D'ORSAY 10.30 a.m.	Mar. 10	Record of conversation between Locarno Powers on Mar. 10.	82
64	SIR R. CLIVE Tokyo Tel. No. 94	Mar. 11	Reports sympathy of Japanese press for German attitude to Rhineland.	90
65	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 74	Mar. 11	Refers to No. 61; considers war is a possibility.	90
66	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 34	Mar. 11	Reports M. Stojadinović as saying that Yugoslav Govt. will lie low in Rhineland crisis.	91
67	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 77	Mar. 11	Gives Military Attaché's report on German army's immediate plans and its present capacity.	91
68	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 78	Mar. 11	Gives details of Mr. Ward Price's interview with Herr Hitler on Mar. 9.	92
69	TO SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 21	Mar. 11	Records a conversation of Mar. 10 with M. van Zeeland who indicated five bases of negotiation with Germany.	93

CHAPTER II

Meetings in London of the Locarno Powers and the League Council: Mr. Eden's statement of March 19 March 12-25, 1936

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
70	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 43	Mar. 12	In conversation with Dr. von Hoesch on Mar. 11 Mr. Eden has asked German Govt. to make gesture by undertaking not to fortify the Rhineland zone or increase the troops in occupation while negotiations are in progress. <i>Note 9.</i> Account of Cabinet meeting on Mar. 11 at 6 p.m.	96

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
71	TO VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 17	Mar. 12	Gives account of two interviews of M. Maisky with Lord Cranborne on Mar. 9 and 10: Soviet Govt. feel that German action in Rhineland cannot be condoned.	97
72	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 80	Mar. 12	Reports German <i>communiqué</i> stating that Rhineland garrison will not be increased pending negotiations.	99
73	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 81	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 72: German Govt. make condition that strength of French and Belgian troops should also not be increased.	99
74	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 48	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 70: Mr. Eden tells Dr. von Hoesch that he is considerably disappointed with the German reply.	99
75	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 61	Mar. 12	Records a short formal conversation between representatives of the four Locarno powers.	101
76	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 50 Saving	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 27: mentions report that Herr Hitler recently abandoned plans for Austrian <i>coup</i> owing to Army Chiefs' objections.	101
77	MR. DUNBAR Foreign Office	Mar. 12	Dominions Office reports that S. African Govt. will shortly urge H.M.G. to make a courageous stand.	102
78	MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	Mar. 12	Reports conversation with M. Flandin who insists on importance attached by French Govt. to principle of sanctity of treaties.	102
79	MR. LAW	Mar. 12	Letter to Mr. Sargent reporting some growth of anti-German sentiment in the City of London: seriousness of situation now generally realised.	104
80	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin	Mar. 12	Encloses for Sir R. Vansittart copy of a letter to Sir M. Hankey concerning proposed German armament and plant sales to Great Britain.	106
81	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin	Mar. 12	Letter to Sir R. Vansittart commenting on the general picture of Herr Hitler's policy contained in recent telegrams.	107
82	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 62	Mar. 13	Refers to No. 75: gives record of informal discussion between ministers of four Locarno powers on Mar. 12: M. Flandin outlines proposed procedure: British and Belgian Ministers express doubts thereto and suggest alternatives.	109
83	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 85	Mar. 13	Gives further reports as to objections of German army command to Rhineland <i>coup</i> .	111
84	MR. HADOW Prague Tel. No. 9	Mar. 13	Transmits eight points concerning Czechoslovak attitude to German Rhineland policy.	112
85	MR. HADOW Prague Tel. No. 10	Mar. 13	M. Benes categorically denies report that Czechoslovakia has been invited or undertaken to prepare aerodromes for Soviet aeroplanes or to assist their passage to France.	113

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
86	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 89	Mar. 13	Gives particulars of the line taken by U.S. Embassy in Berlin with regard to the chances of a general settlement.	113
87	MR. HADOW Prague Tel. No. 11	Mar. 13	Refers to No. 85 and gives further report as to Soviet pressure regarding passage for aeroplanes.	114
88	SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Mar. 13	Record of conversation in which M. Corbin urged the need for H.M.G. to stand by its obligations. <i>Note 2.</i> Reference to similar call from M. Titulescu.	115
89	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 326	Mar. 13	Examines critically Italian explanation as to the bombing of the British ambulance at Quoram.	116
90	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 91	Mar. 14	German press now recognizes that English opinion has stiffened against Germany.	118
91	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 63	Mar. 14	Record of two informal discussions between the Ministers of the four Locarno powers on Mar. 13.	119
92	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 94	Mar. 14	Reports that in Herr Hitler's absence he has delivered message to Baron von Neurath expressing H.M.G.'s hope that Germany will attend League Council meeting.	120
93	TO MR. HADOW Prague Tel. No. 30	Mar. 14	Refers to Nos. 85 and 87: M. Flandin gives categorical denial that Russian aeroplanes are proceeding to France.	121
94	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 95	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 92: urged Baron von Neurath to use all his influence to induce Chancellor to send a representative.	121
95	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 64	Mar. 14	Records proceedings at private followed by public meetings of League Council in London.	122
96	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 78 Saving	Mar. 14	Reports Italian view that H.M.G.'s conciliatory attitude over Rhineland is due to desire to extend sanctions against Italy.	123
97	MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	Mar. 14	Records conversation in which Prince Bismarck gives reasons for Herr Hitler's attitude towards Rhineland.	124
98	SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Mar. 14	Records conversation in which M. Massigli speaks of his concern at likely course of French opinion in event of a failure to agree in London.	125
99	FOREIGN OFFICE	Mar. 14	Record of a private meeting of Ministers of four Locarno powers at 12.45 p.m. following League Council meeting on Mar. 14: see No. 95. <i>Note 3.</i> Text of article 17 of League Covenant.	126
100	TO SIR E. OVEY Brussels No. 149	Mar. 14	Transmits proposals submitted by M. van Zeeland to Locarno powers on Mar. 13.	129

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
101 To SIR P. RAMSAY Copenhagen No. 91	Mar. 14	Danish Minister on Mar. 9 expressed to Lord Stanhope hope that H.M.G. were not taking recent German move too seriously: loss of German market would ruin Denmark: Lord Stanhope said that H.M.G. did not treat the matter too tragically.	132
102 SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 104	Mar. 15	Refers to Vol. XV, No. 540: Military Attaché on Mar. 12 delivers message to Emperor, who is disappointed.	133
103 SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 105	Mar. 15	Ethiopian Govt. <i>communiqué</i> of Mar. 13 denies Rome report of direct Ethiopian negotiation with Italy.	134
104 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 98	Mar. 15	Reports a half-hour interview in which he made a strong appeal to Herr Hitler to send representative to London: received tirade about German honour but anticipates agreement.	134
105 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 99	Mar. 15	Refers to No. 104: gives further details of conversation.	135
106 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 135	Mar. 15	Air Attaché learns that French air staff has taken no preparatory measures in present crisis owing to manifest dangers of such action.	136
107 VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 32	Mar. 15	Reports that Soviet Staff Officer completely denies rumours of consultations with Czechoslovakia about Soviet aircraft: suggests story is a German invention.	136
108 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 103	Mar. 15	Says that he has received German reply to Council's invitation. <i>Note 2.</i> Gives summary of German reply and of subsequent argument over translation of 'alsbald'.	137
109 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 69	Mar. 15	Records a further informal discussion on evening of Mar. 14 between Ministers of four Locarno powers.	137
110 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Mar. 15	Memo. for the Cabinet suggesting policy and procedure to be followed by Locarno powers in dealing with Rhineland crisis. <i>Note 4.</i> Account of Cabinet debate on this memo. on Mar. 16.	139
111 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 478	Mar. 15	Account of conversation on Mar. 14 in which M. Flandin outlined tactics that he proposed to employ at forthcoming meeting of Council. Mr. Eden agreed to procedure suggested.	141
112 SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 351	Mar. 15	Forwards account by Military Attaché of an interview with General Gamelin on Mar. 14.	142
113 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 72	Mar. 16	Summarizes private and public sessions of Council with discussion of reply to German telegram: see No. 108.	145

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
114 MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	Mar. 16	Records a conversation with M. Massigli who favours referring problem of validity of Franco-Soviet treaty to Hague Court.	146
115 CABINET CONCLUSIONS Extract	Mar. 16	Record of a conversation between Mr. N. Chamberlain and M. Flandin on Mar. 15 on the Rhineland crisis: Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion of an international force for the demilitarized zone well received.	147
116 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 106	Mar. 17	Gives text of short German statement asking for H.M.G.'s support for discussion of German Govt.'s proposals: Baron von Neurath promises that after receiving private assurance from H.M.G., German representative will be ready to leave for London.	150
117 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 154	Mar. 17	Signor Suvich considers chance of Ethiopian settlement slight if Committee of 13 supervises negotiations: hints that direct negotiations might succeed.	151
118 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 62	Mar. 17	Refers to No. 116: gives text of his reply to Dr. von Hoesch.	151
119 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 73	Mar. 17	M. Flandin, in very depressed mood, says that his mission to London has been a failure: describes Council meeting as misfortune for both League and Anglo-French relations.	152
120 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 145	Mar. 17	French Govt. insist that action following German violation of Locarno must be decided on by Locarno powers and not by League Council: M. Léger in grave mood wants some measure such as financial sanction. <i>Note 2.</i> Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin on Mar. 18 comments on practical difficulties of a financial sanction against Germany.	153
121 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Mar. 17	Minute discussing German intentions: thinks triumvirate desires peace for the present in Western, but less certainly in Central and Eastern Europe: regards recent German offers as no more than examples of Herr Hitler's <u>ephemeral sincerity</u> .	154
122 LORD CRANBORNE Foreign Office	Mar. 17	Minute arguing that it is not in France's interest for H.M.G. to underwrite French commitments in Eastern Europe: H.M.G. should work for a settlement giving Germany a freer hand in Central Europe with economic aid in return for reduction of German armaments. <i>Note 2.</i> Extract from minute by Mr. Sargent on case for asking France to abandon her Eastern commitments. <i>Note 3.</i> Extract from letter by Mr. H. B. Butler suggesting that Rhineland occupation signifies Herr Hitler's transition to a peace policy.	155

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123	MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	Mar. 17	Records telephone conversation in which M. Massigli deplored H.M.G.'s proposals: cf. No. 110.	158
124	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 502	Mar. 17	Refers to No. 118: says that he has agreed with M. Flandin over reply to German message.	159
125	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 337	Mar. 17	Refers to No. 124: after agreement with M. Flandin he gave text to Dr. von Hoesch.	159
126	MR. SMALLBONES Frankfort-on-Main No. 11	Mar. 17	Gives account of speech by Herr Hitler in Frankfort-on-Main on Mar. 16.	160
127	MR. KIRKPATRICK Berlin	Mar. 17	Letter to Mr. Wigram on translation of 'alsbald'.	162
128	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 109	Mar. 18	Stresses need to make clear to Herr von Ribbentrop that those desiring Germany's friendship look for her loyalty to engagements and renunciation of force.	163
129	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 146	Mar. 18	Discusses character and extent of present phase of French criticism of British policy in Rhineland crisis: thinks French public opinion is not quite so averse to concession as M. Flandin suggests.	163
130	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 74	Mar. 18	Describes private and public sessions of League Council on Mar. 17, mainly concerned with invitation to German delegate.	165
131	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 76	Mar. 18	Records two further informal discussions on Mar. 17 between ministers of four Locarno powers of British, French, and Belgian proposals for dealing with Rhineland crisis.	167
132	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 77	Mar. 18	Records an informal discussion between ministers of four Locarno powers at noon: French and Belgian demand for H.M.G.'s full acceptance of Locarno obligations. <i>Note 4.</i> Summary of Cabinet discussion at 6.30 p.m.	169
133	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 57 Saving	Mar. 18	Reports that food and raw material supplies in Germany would not suffice for a long military campaign.	171
134	CHIEFS OF STAFF SUB-COMMITTEE	Mar. 18	Report on the condition of British armed forces to meet the possibility of war with Germany.	171
135	MR. SARGENT Foreign Office	Mar. 18	Minute discussing possible British policies towards Germany.	182
136	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 353	Mar. 18	Records a visit by Herr von Ribbentrop and preliminary discussion as to the basis of future negotiations.	185
137	MR. WALEY Treasury	Mar. 18	Letter proposing terms of answer to parliamentary question concerning German indebtedness to British bankers since 1934.	186

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138 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 151	Mar. 19	Reports meeting of French Council of Ministers to hear M. Flandin's account of the London negotiations.	186
139 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 149	Mar. 19	Reports frank and pessimistic comments by M. Sarraut on the international situation in general and H.M.G.'s policy in the Rhineland dispute in particular.	187
140 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 149 (cont.)	Mar. 19	Continues No. 139 and suggests that 'super-structure' mentioned in No. 131 might go some way to calming French fears.	188
141 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 78	Mar. 19	Gives brief account of League Council meeting on Mar. 18: Herr von Ribbentrop unable to attend: French-Belgian draft resolution discussed.	189
142 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 80	Mar. 19	Gives account of League Council meeting on morning of Mar. 19, when Herr von Ribbentrop addressed meeting: and at afternoon session when Franco-Belgian resolution carried with only German vote against.	189
143 MR. STEVENSON Foreign Office	Mar. 19	Records conversation with Mr. F. P. Walters on arrangements for forthcoming meeting of League Committee of 13. <i>Note 3.</i> Cabinet agrees on Mar. 19 not to propose raising of sanctions in present circumstances.	190
144 LOCARNO POWERS PROPOSALS	Mar. 19	Text of proposals drawn up by representatives of Belgium, France, U.K., and Italy on Mar. 19, 1936, following their consideration of the German Govt.'s communication of Mar. 7.	192
145 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 354	Mar. 19	Has described Locarno Powers' proposals to Herr von Ribbentrop whose first reaction was unfavourable.	197
146 To SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora No. 112	Mar. 19	Refers to recent request by Turkish General Staff for information as to British air and naval assistance in event of war with Italy: replies in general terms that H.M.G. would fulfil their obligations in whatever form was most practicable.	198
147 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 65	Mar. 20	Refers to two assurances to France and U.K. given by Herr Hitler in an interview with Mr. Ward Price on Mar. 13, and asks for observations.	199
148 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 114	Mar. 20	Reply to No. 147: thinks that Herr Hitler is anxious at the moment to make things easy for H.M.G.	200
149 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 355	Mar. 20	Herr von Ribbentrop, after reading text of No. 144, states his opinion that several of the proposals would be <u>unacceptable</u> to German Govt.	200
150 SIR E. OVEY Brussels No. 159	Mar. 20	Refers to speech by M. van Zeeland describing League Council meeting in London and praising British pledge of assistance to France and Belgium as the first of its kind in British history.	201

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151 SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 123	Mar. 21	Refers to Ethiopian Govt.'s protest of Mar. 17 against continued use of gas attacks by Italian forces. <i>Note 2.</i> Committee of 13 on Mar. 23 refers protest to Italian Govt. and cites gas protocol of 1925.	202
152 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 69	Mar. 21	Herr von Ribbentrop is returning to Berlin for consultations.	203
153 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 84	Mar. 21	Summarizes meeting of League Council on Mar. 20: after receiving text of proposals of Mar. 19 (No. 144) Council adjourns until Mar. 23.	203
154 MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	Mar. 21	M. Massigli has called attention to passage in M. Flandin's speech of Mar. 20 in which he repudiated possibility of occupation of any part of French or Belgian territory by an International Force.	204
155 MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	Mar. 21	Herr Dieckhoff in conversation gives reasons why German press has reacted strongly against proposals of Mar. 19.	205
156 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 119	Mar. 22	Reports that Baron von Neurath will pass on to Herr Hitler Mr. Eden's hope that German reply to No. 144 will not be a flat negative.	207
157 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 120	Mar. 23	Reports opinion of German press that public opinion in England is very critical of memo. of Mar. 19.	207
158 ST. JAMES'S PALACE 10.30 a.m.	Mar. 23	Record of meeting of Committee of 13 on Mar. 23: Committee takes note of replies of Italian and Ethiopian Govts. to appeal of Mar. 3 and requests M. Avenol and Señor de Madariaga to get into touch with the two parties with a view to prompt conclusion of armistice and peace.	208
159 SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 396	Mar. 23	M. Caillaux in conversation on Mar. 21 favoured British-Belgian-French defensive alliance combined with talks with Germany, facilities for German emigration to S. America and colonial concessions.	212
160 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 164	Mar. 24	M. Flandin told journalists that proposals of Mar. 19 must be accepted or rejected in their entirety: French press is uneasy about alleged British encouragement to Germany.	214
161 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 91	Mar. 24	League Council met and decided to adjourn without closing the extraordinary session: next meeting to be at Geneva.	214
162 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 542	Mar. 24	Records that M. Corbin referred to M. Flandin's dissatisfaction with Mr. Eden's Parliamentary statement on Mar. 23.	215
163 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 370	Mar. 24	Records conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop, who said that Herr Hitler could not agree to three suggested	217

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		concessions, but would produce in a few days' time a final and important statement of his views.	
		<i>Note 4.</i> Cabinet on Mar. 25 authorized contact with French and Belgian General Staffs: Herr Hitler to be asked not to fortify demilitarized zone during next few months.	
164 To SIR E. OVEY Brussels No. 169	Mar. 24	Reports Belgian Ambassador's message from M. van Zeeland suggesting desirability of going slow in present negotiations with Germany for a few days but offering to come to London if necessary.	220
165 To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade No. 93	Mar. 24	Records conversation with M. Pouritch who recommended deliberation in negotiations with Germany and saw advantages in allowing Signor Mussolini to exhaust himself in Africa.	221
166 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 93	Mar. 25	Records that in brief conversation on Mar. 24 M. Paul-Boncour said that France could never agree to German fortification of Rhineland zone.	222
		<i>Note 2.</i> Details of further conversation with M. Paul-Boncour on Mar. 25.	
167 SIR H. CHILTON Madrid Tel. No. 72	Mar. 25	Reports political unrest and rumours of an army <i>coup</i> to take place before the municipal elections.	223
168 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 376	Mar. 25	Records further conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop as to the desirability of some co-operative gesture from Herr Hitler in the Rhineland controversy: mentions postponement of fortification of Rhineland for a limited period: Herr von Ribbentrop rejects this as impossible.	224
169 To VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow No. 178	Mar. 25	Records conversation about German intentions with M. Litvinov who regrets absence of reference to E. Europe in proposals of Mar. 19: Mr. Eden promises to make clear in speech on Mar. 26 H.M.G.'s interest in peaceful settlement for whole of Europe.	226

CHAPTER III

Reactions of the Locarno Powers to German memorandum of March 31: progress of Italian arms in Ethiopia March 26–April 21, 1936

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		Introductory Note	227
170 To SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 45	Mar. 26	Baron de Cartier yesterday conveyed Belgian Govt.'s proposal for Paris meeting on Mar. 31 to concert measures in view of	229

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NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		German attitude: Sir R. Vansittart considered this undesirable pending German reply.	
171 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 62 Saving	Mar. 26	Reports that drafting of counter-proposals is taxing wits of Chancellor and his advisers.	230
172 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 376	Mar. 26	Reports long conversation with Marquis Theodoli, who persisted in belief in British rivalry to Italian interests in Mediterranean.	230
173 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 180	Mar. 27	Reports comment by M. Sugimura and others on Italian reaction to Señor de Madariaga's mission.	232
174 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 88	Mar. 27	Reports conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop who complains of H.M.G.'s decision to go ahead with staff discussions: in reply Mr. Eden stressed need of Belgian and French Govts. for reassurance following severe shock given to European confidence by German action.	233
175 MR. SARGENT Foreign Office	Mar. 27	Pointed out to Herr Dieckhoff in reply to complaint against staff discussions with French that Herr Hitler had himself said that he saw no objection to an Anglo-French alliance.	236
176 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 186	Mar. 28	Reports wide-ranging conversation between M. Chambrun and Signor Mussolini on Italian reasons for not approving proposals of Mar. 19, Herr Hitler's probable aims in Rhineland, and Italian interest in reconstructing Stresa front when sanctions ended.	236
177 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 133	Mar. 28	In reply to query from Foreign Office, states belief in existence of far-reaching German colonial ambitions.	238
178 TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 102	Mar. 28	States that in course of conversation with M. Corbin on Mar. 27 about the German situation he stated his objections to an early meeting of Locarno Powers.	238
179 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 187	Mar. 28	Official Italian spokesman mentioned two conditions for settlement in Ethiopian war satisfactory to Italy: (1) lifting of sanctions; (2) reversal of League condemnation; Signor Suvich added to this League undertaking not to influence Emperor against Italian peace terms.	240
180 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Mar. 28	Memo. for the Cabinet regarding implementation of Part III of proposals of Mar. 19.	241
181 SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 499	Mar. 28	Offers general survey of French public opinion during Rhineland crisis.	243

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
182	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 189	Mar. 30	Refers to No. 176: M. Chambrun comments on this interview and thinks that H.M.G. should use their influence to persuade Emperor to conclude peace speedily before victory which Italians expect shortly; believes Signor Mussolini is ready to talk at once.	246
183	MR. STRANG Foreign Office	Mar. 30	Note on progress of League enquiry by Señor de Madariaga as to use of poison gas by Italian forces.	248
184	MEETING OF MINISTERS Foreign Office	Mar. 30	Extract from notes of a meeting of Cabinet ministers on Mar. 30 to consider the forthcoming General Staff discussions and the terms of a letter to the French and Belgian Govts. <i>Note 13.</i> In accordance with Mr. Baldwin's wishes, Mr. Eden agrees to hold back the letter until after the Cabinet meeting on Apr. 1.	249
185	MEETING OF MINISTERS Foreign Office	Mar. 30	See No. 184: a further extract from notes of this meeting: action of Committee of 13 in view of Italian use of poison gas discussed: Mr. Eden points to bad precedent for use of poison gas in European warfare.	253
186	MR. LAW	Mar. 30	Reports complete change of City opinion following Mr. Eden's speech of Mar. 26: it has not become pro-French but pro-British.	254
187	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 140	Mar. 31	Reports that in view of Mr. Baldwin's statement in House of Commons about General Staff discussions, German Govt. are now reconsidering terms of their forthcoming communication.	255
188	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 92	Mar. 31	Records conversation with M. Corbin about terms of General Staff discussions: promises letter after Cabinet meeting on Apr. 1: reiterates his unwillingness for early meeting of three Locarno Powers.	256
189	SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Mar. 31	Minute for Mr. Eden arguing the unwisdom in forthcoming staff discussions of any statement depreciating Britain's long-term military capacity.	258
190	MR. STRANG Foreign Office	Mar. 31	Note of a conversation in which Mr. Walters summarized Señor de Madariaga's negotiations with Italian Govt., and admitted likelihood that Signor Mussolini was playing for time: need for some show of activity by Señor de Madariaga stressed.	259
191	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 95 Saving	Apr. 1	Gives text of two Italian <i>communiqués</i> announcing major Italian victory in the Lake Ascianghi area, with heavy Ethiopian casualties.	260

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
192 MR. HARCOURT-SMITH Foreign Office	Apr. 1	An informant states that Herr von Ribbentrop is opposed to German agitation for colonies, which he fears may lead to German naval expansion and the alienation of British sympathies from the Third Reich.	262
193 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 400	Apr. 1	Reports Herr von Ribbentrop's communication of new German peace plan: after preliminary discussion of some points Mr. Eden promised to see him next day after examining the document and consulting colleagues.	262
194 CHIEFS OF STAFF SUB-COMMITTEE	Apr. 1	Memo. stressing difficulty of carrying on Staff discussions with France and Belgium on one hand and Germany on the other: suggesting that full preliminary conversations with former are out of the question: and proposing that instructions for these should accordingly be strictly limited in scope.	264
195 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 194	Apr. 2	Commenting on German memo. on Apr. 1, Signor Suvich said that Italy would take part in a meeting of Locarno Powers in Brussels but not in General Staff arrangements: she would send an officer to participate in proposed commission of control.	266
196 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 6 Saving	Apr. 2	M. Flandin's first impressions of German reply unfavourable: will put forward considered view after closer study with colleagues.	267
197 SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 7 Saving	Apr. 2	Refers to No. 196: M. Flandin said he finds sanctions a further complication and is under increasing pressure to raise them.	267
198 To SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 417	Apr. 2	Records he has seen Herr von Ribbentrop again about new German plan and told him that H.M.G.'s next step will be to get into touch with other govts.: meanwhile Staff conversations must go ahead.	268
199 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 601	Apr. 2	Has handed M. Corbin text of letter and covering note contemplated in the proposals of Mar. 19: has received letter in return with French Govt.'s agreement to H.M.G.'s view on limited scope of staff discussions: again indicates his disinclination to attend early meeting of Locarno Powers.	270

Encl. 1: Mr. Eden's covering letter of Apr. 1: agrees to General Staff discussions of limited scope.

Encl. 2: Mr. Eden's letter of Apr. 1 with H.M.G.'s promise to come immediately to the assistance of the French Govt. in accordance with the Treaty of Locarno in any agreed measures to ensure the security of France against unprovoked

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		aggression. Similar letter addressed to Belgian Govt.	
200 SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 152	Apr. 3	Forwards Emperor Haile Selassie's account of battle south of Amba Alagi on Mar. 31 and Apr. 1: intense fighting has prevented him from giving personal attention to League enquiry of Mar. 23.	273
201 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 146	Apr. 3	Reports total lack in German press of any wish to understand difficulties of H.M.G. created by German action.	274
202 TO SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 53	Apr. 3	Reports that letters respecting proposals of Mar. 19 were exchanged with Belgian Ambassador on Apr. 2: M. van Zeeland suggested date of meeting of Locarno Powers, which Mr. Eden, however, opposes until programme clearer.	274
203 TO SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 129	Apr. 3	An Abyssinian Envoy asks for advice in view of imminent danger of collapse of Ethiopian army. <i>Note 1.</i> In tel. No. 133 of Apr. 4 Sir S. Barton is asked for suggestions as to possible material help of other than financial nature.	275
204 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Apr. [3]	Note recording statement from a highly placed German inside source as to German programme of expansion after adequate rearmament.	276
205 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 420	Apr. 3	Herr von Ribbentrop makes urgent eleventh hour plea for abandonment of staff discussions: Mr. Eden says decision thereon cannot be varied.	277
206 MR. LAW	Apr. 3	Tells Mr. Sargent that City of London as a whole no longer pro-German: anti-French feeling slumbering: thinks lower middle class violently anti-French and lower classes maintaining traditional anti-German feeling.	278
207 TO SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 108	Apr. 4	Instructs him to tell French Govt. that H.M.G. are anxious to accelerate Señor de Madariaga's conciliatory efforts by urging Italian Govt.'s cooperation. <i>Note 2.</i> Cabinet agrees to meeting of League Committee of 13 on Apr. 8 and to extension of sanctions jointly with other nations.	279
208 TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 634	Apr. 4	Reports conversation with M. Cambon, to whom he expressed his objections to early meeting of Locarno Powers, but as Señor de Madariaga had proposed meeting of Committee of 13 on Apr. 8 or 9 at Geneva he suggested a meeting of Locarno Powers then. <i>Note 4.</i> M. Flandin agrees to proposed meeting at Geneva.	280

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
209	To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 125	Apr. 5	Instructs him to remind Italian Govt. of undertaking not to bomb Addis Ababa as an open city.	282
210	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 213	Apr. 6	Reports conversation with Signor Suvich concerning meeting of Committee of 13.	282
211	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 214	Apr. 7	Holds out no hope of Signor Mussolini agreeing to proposals on lines of Committee of 5 or Hoare-Laval; suggests Emperor might ask at once for direct negotiations.	283
212	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 219	Apr. 7	Reports that M. de Chambrun has urged speedy cessation of hostilities and conclusion of peace on Italian Govt.	283
213	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 76 Saving	Apr. 7	Reports that approaching General Staff discussions have intensified pessimism in many quarters: <i>Schadenfreude</i> at M.F.A. over rebuff to Herr von Ribbentrop.	284
214	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 77 Saving	Apr. 7	Reports comment in <i>Angriff</i> on statement by Mr. N. Chamberlain on return of German colonies.	285
215	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin	Apr. 7	In a letter to Mr. Sargent promises report on English edition of <i>Mein Kampf</i> but warns that it would be unprofitable to make much of contradictions between Herr Hitler's statements at different periods.	286
216	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 167	Apr. 8	Suggests some forms of help to Ethiopia: mentions Ethiopian desire for English mandate for a term of years.	287
217	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 194	Apr. 8	Reports receipt of French declaration and memo. replying to German memo. of Mar. 31.	289
218	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 168	Apr. 8	Transmits details of Italian peace terms conveyed to Emperor in March.	290
219	To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 112	Apr. 8	Informs him that Cabinet proposes General Staff discussions should open in London on Apr. 15; suggests representation by service attachés sufficient.	291
220	SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Apr. 8	Record of a conversation with M. Masaryk on the Czech Govt.'s attitude to the Sudeten-Deutsche minority.	292
221	HOTEL DES BERGUES Geneva 2.30 p.m.	Apr. 8	Record of an Anglo-French conversation concerning the Italo-Ethiopian negotiations.	293
222	MR. EDMOND Geneva No. 25	Apr. 8	Forwards translation of French memo. of Apr. 8 making proposals for action in view of unsatisfactory character of German counter-proposals of Mar. 31.	297
223	MR. EDMOND Geneva No. 26	Apr. 8	Forwards record of Anglo-French conversation at 3 p.m. in Geneva with regard to future proceedings of four Locarno Powers in the Rhineland dispute.	300

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
224	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 31 L.N.	Apr. 9	Mr. Eden comments on two meetings of Committee of 13 on Apr. 8: describes M. Flandin's attitude as cynical and obstructive: tells him meeting of Committee of 18 seems inevitable failing real progress.	304
225	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 30 L.N.	Apr. 9	Mr. Eden describes proceedings at two meetings of Committee of 13.	305
226	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 34	Apr. 9	Gives account by Mr. Eden of conversation at Geneva with two Ethiopian representatives who thanked Great Britain for her help and declined to meet Italian delegates save in presence of League representatives.	306
227	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 20 Saving	Apr. 9	Forwards name of French representatives at forthcoming Staff conversations.	307
228	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 384	Apr. 9	Forwards memo. by Colonel Hotblack on views of members of German General Staff on occupation of demilitarized zone and lines of future expansion.	307
229	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 35 L.N.	Apr. 10	Mr. Eden considers Committee of 13 meeting on Apr. 9 more satisfactory than preceding: mood of profound pessimism nevertheless prevails at Geneva.	310
230	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 36 L.N.	Apr. 10	Mr. Eden reports proceedings of Committee of 13 meeting of Apr. 9.	311
231	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. Unnumbered	Apr. 10	Forwards text of press <i>communiqué</i> by Locarno signatories: it was decided at meeting in Geneva that day that U.K. representatives should seek elucidation of certain points in German memo. of Mar. 31.	312
232	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 174	Apr. 10	Reports further Italian gas attacks and asks whether suitable medicines can be sent immediately.	314
233	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 19 Saving	Apr. 10	Gives Baron Aloisi's statement before conversation of four Locarno Powers on Apr. 10 claiming Italy has been ignored by H.M.G. in all recent official manifestations. <i>Note 1.</i> The other three delegates say they are waiting for Italian letter of guarantee.	314
234	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 20 Saving	Apr. 10	Mr. Eden sends account of Locarno Powers' meeting that afternoon to consider French memo. of Apr. 8 (No. 222).	315
235	SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Apr. 10	Minute arguing that a further extension of sanctions is impracticable.	316
236	MR. SARGENT Foreign Office	Apr. 10	Minute commenting on new French proposal of Apr. 8: discusses alternatives apparently presented to H.M.G. and objections to each.	316

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
237	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 232	Apr. 11	Reports Signor Suvich's indignation at arrangements to convoke Committee of 18.	318
238	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 37 L.N.	Apr. 11	Mr. Eden describes meeting of Committee of 13 on Apr. 10: plans made for Señor de Madariaga to meet Italian representative at Geneva on Apr. 14, and for meeting of Committee of 18.	318
239	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 241	Apr. 15	Describes account by M. de Chambrun of two interviews with Signor Suvich concerning projected Geneva negotiations and probable Italian terms.	319
240	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 26 Saving	Apr. 15	Reports M. Flandin's belief that only course now open is direct Italian-Ethiopian negotiations: he is opposed to meeting of Committee of 18 and any extension of sanctions.	321
241	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin	Apr. 15	Letter to Mr. Sargent commenting on death of Herr von Hoesch.	322
242	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 38 L.N.	Apr. 16	Mr. Eden recounts conversation with M. de Vasconcellos on conditions for peace negotiations laid down by Baron Aloisi: Mr. Eden says H.M.G. still prepared to apply any financial or economic measure against Italy agreed to by other League members.	323
243	SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Apr. 16	Records conversation with M. Corbin who thinks Ethiopian question must be liquidated in view of menace of further German action in Europe: in reply, rejects M. Corbin's argument.	324
244	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 40	Apr. 17	Mr. Eden recounts criticisms by Señor de Madariaga of pro-Italian attitudes of M. Avenol and French Govt.	326
245	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 41 L.N.	Apr. 17	Mr. Eden forwards text of report by M. Avenol of conversation with Baron Aloisi concerning intended Italian procedure for peace negotiations.	327
246	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 42	Apr. 17	Mr. Eden says that Italian conditions for negotiation have been communicated to Ethiopian delegation who regard them as unacceptable: Committee of 13 has discussed the position.	329
247	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 45 L.N.	Apr. 17	M. de Vasconcellos tells Mr. Eden that he thinks additional sanctions at this stage would place continuance of existing sanctions in jeopardy.	330
248	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 21 Saving	Apr. 17	Mr. Eden records pessimistic comments by M. Paul-Boncour on the state of Anglo-French relations resulting from Rhineland crisis.	330
249	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 46	Apr. 17	Mr. Eden reports that Committee of 13 met that morning and decided that its mandate was exhausted and that it should report to Council on Apr. 20.	332

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
250	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 47 L.N.	Apr. 18	Mr. Eden sums up recent proceedings of Committee of 13: thinks them as satisfactory as could be expected.	333
251	TO MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 29	Apr. 18	Sir R. Vansittart informs Mr. Eden that he had pointed out to M. Corbin that morning Mr. Eden's view that existing sanctions must be maintained: considered therefore that French representative should show complete solidarity with H.M.G. at Council meeting on Apr. 20.	334
252	SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 537	Apr. 18	In conversation M. Sarraut admitted recent Anglo-French divergence: dreaded effect of its being advertised: hoped two countries arrive at preconceived policy towards German colonial claims.	334
253	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 467	Apr. 18	Signor Suvich has received representations from various govts. asking for renewed assurances as to immunity of Addis Ababa from bombing by Italian aircraft.	336
254	SIR G. KNOX Budapest	Apr. 18	In letter to Mr. Sargent describes comments by Herr von Papen on Rhineland occupation and general aims of German policy.	337
255	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 48 L.N.	Apr. 19	Mr. Eden describes conversation with Yugoslav representative about H.M.G.'s intentions: assures him that rumours of British plans for a deal with Italy have no foundation.	338
256	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 197	Apr. 19	Refers to dire straits of Ethiopian forces and asserts that the interest and honour of the League and England call for five immediate acts of assistance.	340
257	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 198	Apr. 19	Reports that Ethiopian Govt. may remove to Gore, and hopes to be allowed to use wireless facilities of Gambella to keep in touch with Geneva and foreign countries.	341
258	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 199	Apr. 20	Message for War Office concerning stores and defence preparations of British legation guard at Addis Ababa.	342
259	TO MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 34	Apr. 20	Message for Mr. Eden refers to No. 256 and states it is impossible for H.M.G. to give financial assistance to either belligerent: would subscribe to fund initiated by League.	342
260	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 85 Saving	Apr. 20	Suggests, in reply to F.O. query, procedure for communicating French plan to German Govt.	343
261	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 23 Saving	Apr. 20	Mr. Eden gives summary of private and public sessions of League Council that morning, with long declaration by Baron Aloisi.	343
262	SIR T. INSKIP C.P. 110(36)	Apr. 20	Circulates to Cabinet Report on Staff conversations with French and Belgian representatives on Apr. 15-16.	345

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263 To SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 170	Apr. 21	States that League Council at its meeting on Apr. 20 agreed to maintain existing sanctions in force but not to extend them: comments on this disappointing result. <i>Note 1.</i> Gives further details of Council discussions and quotes from Mr. Eden's speech. <i>Note 2.</i> Baron Aloisi considers result of Council meeting a triumph for Italy.	346
264 To SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 172	Apr. 21	Reply to No. 256: regrets to say that H.M.G. cannot act alone over any of five courses suggested.	347
265 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 118	Apr. 21	M. Paul-Boncour has stated that after French elections French Govt. favours joint Anglo-French <i>démarche</i> in Rome to bring Italo-Ethiopian conflict to an end.	349
266 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 88 Saving	Apr. 21	Refers to Mr. Baldwin's allusion to Herr Hitler in speech on Apr. 18: suggestion of insincerity will be replied to later.	349

CHAPTER IV

Presentation of British questionnaire to German Government: Mr. Eden proposes discontinuance of sanctions against Italy April 22-June 19, 1936

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
267 To SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 173	Apr. 22	Outlines plans for transporting Emperor and family from Jibouti to Palestine.	350
268 To SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 179	Apr. 23	Sends instructions to act on basis that he is the representative of a neutral Power in relations with Italian forces.	351
269 M. CORBIN French Embassy London	Apr. 23	Letter to Sir R. Vansittart enclosing a memo. with questions which French Govt. would like to see addressed to German Govt.	351
270 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin	Apr. 23	Letter to Mr. Sargent, referring to No. 241: gives further details as to unfavourable impression made by Herr von Hoesch's pessimistic report to his Govt.	354
271 SIR G. CLERK Paris	Apr. 24	Letter to Mr. Sargent giving account of comments by French officials on recent economic proposals by M. Flandin.	355
272 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Apr. 25	Memo. for Cabinet drawing attention to gloomy view of future of Europe presented by two recent despatches of Sir E. Phipps.	357
273 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	Apr. 25	Minute deprecating talk of closing Suez Canal or of extending sanctions in view of present state of British armaments. <i>Notes 1 and 2.</i> Summary of other F.O. comments for and against the ideas of closing the Canal.	358

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
274	MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Apr. [25]	Memo. for the Cabinet on the present position of negotiations for an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.	360
275	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 22	Apr. 26	M. Beck hopes that any allusion to Poland in questionnaire will have due regard for Poland's susceptibilities.	368
276	MR. LAMBERT Foreign Office	Apr. 27	Memo. on the choice for Italy and England in the Abyssinian war.	369
277	MR. EDEN Foreign Office	Apr. [28]	Memo. for the Cabinet on questions to be addressed to the German Govt. <i>Note 10.</i> Summary of Cabinet discussions and process of drafting the questionnaire before its despatch to Berlin on May 6. <i>Encl.:</i> Draft of despatch to Sir E. Phipps embodying the questionnaire.	372
278	TO MR. MACKILLOP Moscow No. 247	Apr. 28	Gives account of conversation with M. Maisky, who indicated Soviet Govt.'s criticism of aspects of H.M.G.'s recent policy.	378
279	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 790	Apr. 29	Reports discussion with M. Corbin of Austrian situation, liquidation of Italo-Ethiopian dispute and H.M.G.'s intention to maintain their position in Mediterranean.	381
280	MR. LAW	Apr. 29	Letter to Mr. Sargent enclosing comment on City opinion, which is only at present stirred by Abyssinia.	384
281	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 219	Apr. 30	Reports that Italian advance guard approaches Addis Ababa: suggests communication from Italian Commander to doyen of diplomatic body to facilitate entry without disorder.	386
282	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 101 Saving	Apr. 30	Comments on General Goering's appointment to supervise regulation of raw materials and foreign exchange.	386
283	MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	Apr. 30	Minute for Sir R. Vansittart referring to No. 277: sets out and explains proposed amendments to draft despatch to Sir E. Phipps.	387
284	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 223	May 1	Reports that Emperor has sent for him and in painful interview appeals for help from H.M.G. under six heads: he gave provisional reply and promised to report.	389
285	TO SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 194	May 1	Replies to No. 284: approves his replies, subject to two reservations.	391
286	SIR E. OVEY Brussels No. 227	May 1	Refers to disappointment at recent statements by Mr. Baldwin: hopes they do not foreshadow willingness to discuss surrender of colonial mandates.	391
287	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 226	May 2	Reports that Emperor about to leave for Jibouti: direction of affairs confided to Council of Ministers.	392

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288	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 227	May 2	Reports that Emperor wishes to proceed to Jerusalem: enquires about facilities on H.M. ship that will transport him.	392
289	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. Unnumbered	May 2	Reports that Emperor and family left for Jibouti early that morning: looting in town: Italians should arrive tomorrow.	393
290	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 104 Saving	May 2	Reports some further comments on General Goering's new appointment (No. 282).	393
291	MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	May 2	Reports an urgent message from M. Flandin objecting to reported intention of H.M.G. to put questions to German Govt. without first consulting French Govt.	393
292	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 200	May 3	Reports discussions with French authorities as to arrangements for Emperor's passage through Jibouti. <i>Note 3. H.M.G. has decided to send a cruiser for the Emperor.</i>	395
293	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 163	May 4	Refers to No. 282: General Goering's appointment influenced by military demand for heavy armament expenditure following Rhineland crisis.	396
294	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. Unnumbered	May 4	Describes movements of British Legation guard in defence of U.S. and Belgian Legation.	396
295	TO SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 230	May 4	Emperor of Ethiopia, family and suite left Jibouti May 4 on H.M.S. <i>Enterprise</i> .	396
296	MR. PINSENT Berlin	May 4	Minute regarding the relative positions of Dr. Schacht and General Goering.	397
297	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 820	May 4	Recounts conversation with M. Corbin, who reports M. Flandin's view that the present is the psychological moment for approaching Italy: Mr. Eden dissents.	398
298	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. Unnumbered	May 5	Reports that U.S. and Turkish Legations safely evacuated that morning.	401
299	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 112	May 5	Instructs him to arrange for interview with Chancellor for May 7 to present questions: in the meantime he should make no communication to French or Belgian colleagues.	402
300	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. Unnumbered	May 5	Reports Italian troops entering Addis Ababa.	402
301	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 164	May 5	Mentions report that leftward turn in French elections has horrified Herr Hitler, who is also annoyed by newspaper forecasts of H.M.G.'s questionnaire.	402
302	TO THE COMMANDER H.M.S. <i>Enterprise</i> Tel. Unnumbered	May 5	Instructs him to inform Emperor that H.M.G. cannot give effect to Emperor's wish to continue his voyage to London.	403

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
303	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 285	May 5	Reports Signor Mussolini's declaration on entry of Italian troops into Addis Ababa.	403
304	MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	May 5	Note for Mr. Eden explaining final amendments to draft of questionnaire for German Govt.	405
305	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 165	May 6	Has applied for interview, but Herr Hitler has left Berlin: will receive Sir E. Phipps on return.	406
306	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 113	May 6	Informs him that Cabinet approves draft despatch sent him by air bag subject to three final revisions: should impress on German Govt. hope that their answers will facilitate early negotiations leading to general settlement of Europe.	407
307	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 541	May 6	Sets out the questions which H.M.G. asks Herr Hitler to answer.	408
308	MAJOR HARDINGE Buckingham Palace	May 6	Encloses message of congratulation for Sir S. Barton from the King.	412
309	TO SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 219	May 7	Forwards extract from his speech of May 6 praising the work of the British Legation Guard of Indian Infantry at Addis Ababa, and expressing regret for death of Dr. Melly.	413
310	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 114 Saving	May 7	Reports he read slowly copy of No. 307 to Baron von Neurath that morning: preliminary discussion followed: interview with Herr Hitler to be arranged for next week.	414
311	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin	May 7	Letter to M. Sargent reporting a leak of information about No. 299 on May 5.	415
312	TO SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 221	May 8	Describes enquiry from Italian Embassy as to whether H.M.G. would agree to withdraw extra detachment of Indian troops from British Legation in Addis Ababa: asks for opinion in light of question of safety. <i>Note 1.</i> Telegram from Addis Ababa says Marshal Badoglio has assumed charge of Ethiopia and has defined role of British Legation including use of cipher.	416
313	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 170	May 9	Reports that he explained to Baron von Neurath on afternoon of May 7 why H.M.G. has suggested early publication of No. 307: Baron von Neurath concurred and promised to explain to Herr Hitler.	417
314	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 241	May 10	Replies to No. 312 and suggests linking withdrawal with satisfactory assurances as to treatment of British subjects and simultaneous action over withdrawal of French detachment at Dire Dawa.	418

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
315 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 50 L.N.	May 10	Mr. Eden records talk with M. Rüstü Aras on the Mediterranean situation and Turkish desire for an agreement between Mediterranean powers as to naval forces.	419
316 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 54 L.N.	May 10	Mr. Eden records talk with M. de Graeff about views of neutral group of Powers who desire maintenance of sanctions and expulsion of Italy from League.	420
317 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	May 11	Letter to Lord Chatfield regretting that the Mediterranean position is as yet too obscure to provide any alleviation of strain on the Fleet.	421
318 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 55	May 12	Mr. Eden records conversation with M. Paul-Boncour who described failure of M. de Chambrun's representations to Signor Mussolini against annexation: regretted that H.M.G. has not participated.	422
319 TO SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 234	May 12	Instructs him to give simple acknowledgement of communications about status of legation pending further instructions.	423
320 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 59	May 13	Mr. Eden records disagreement with M. Paul-Boncour over plans for meeting of four Locarno powers: when it took place later in the day Italian delegate stayed away: nothing of significance passed apart from French report of German strengthening of Rhineland forces.	423
321 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 62 L.N.	May 13	Mr. Eden forwards text of Council resolution continuing present level of sanctions until June 15.	424
322 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 63 L.N.	May 13	Mr. Eden records conversation with M. Litvinov who discussed future League policy towards Italy; blamed M. Laval for past failures and expressed general satisfaction with No. 307.	425
323 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin	May 13	Letter to Mr. Sargent giving comments of some German officials on No. 307 and reasons for its publication.	427
324 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 175	May 14	Reports interview with Herr Hitler, who will delay reply pending installation of new French Govt.: he denounced Bolshevism and Versailles treaty, denied intention of attacking Russia, and showed no urgency over idea of a comprehensive settlement or visit by English Minister.	428
325 SIR W. SELBY Vienna Tel. No. 40	May 14	Cites report of a more conciliatory turn in German policy towards Austria influenced by General Goering, now regarded as the real power in Germany.	430
326 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 176	May 14	Refers to No. 324: adds some further comments by Herr Hitler mainly on Abyssinian crisis and Signor Mussolini's genius.	430

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
327	SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 261	May 14	Reports that, following example of doyen, he called on Marshal Badoglio yesterday with senior members of staff. <i>Note 3.</i> Sir S. Barton granted leave of absence: Mr. P. M. Roberts to take charge.	431
328	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 179	May 15	Refers to No. 324: Herr Hitler repudiated restraint on building of fortifications: otherwise friendly: seemed determined not to bind himself in any way. <i>Note 3.</i> Extracts from minutes showing F.O. disappointment at German attitude.	432
329	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 898	May 15	Describes a conversation in Paris with M. Flandin, who commented on M. Blum's policy and plans, need for a Mediterranean pact, and profoundly depressing attitude of German chancellor.	433
330	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 899	May 15	Describes long and informal conversation on current European problems with M. Blum, who stressed his desire for Anglo-French cooperation.	436
331	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 181	May 19	Reports mischievous campaign by Dr. Goebbels against any binding agreement between Germany and other European powers.	439
332	MR. LLOYD THOMAS Paris Tel. No. 217	May 19	Reports refusal by French Govt. to allow (1) passage of Italian troops on Jibouti railway, and (2) withdrawal of French legation guard at Dire Dawa.	440
333	TO SIR A. WAUCHOPE Jerusalem Tel. No. 211	May 19	From Colonial Office, to inform Emperor Haile Selassie that H.M.G. have no objection to his visiting England incognito: lays down conditions of travel.	441
334	TO SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 266	May 19	Sends message for Captain Erskine at Gore instructing him as to his duties during the next few months.	442
335	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 591	May 21	Forwards account of conversation between Lord Cranborne and Prince Bismarck on May 7 concerning German complaints about contents of the blue book Cmd. 5143: and of second conversation on May 13 in which Mr. Wigram rebutted certain of Prince Bismarck's statements.	443
336	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 611	May 23	Regrets Herr Hitler's delay in replying to H.M.G.'s questionnaire: expresses anxiety of H.M.G. for permanent solution of present situation: instructs him to express to M.F.A. hope that German Govt.'s reply to No. 307 will be quickly forthcoming. <i>Note 4.</i> Account of Cabinet discussion on May 20.	448
337	TO MR. LLOYD THOMAS Paris Tel. No. 17 Saving	May 25	Message from Sir R. Vansittart states that MM. Flandin and Blum were both mistaken in their recollection of Mr. Eden's views about future League policy: in fact	449

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		H.M.G. have not yet decided upon their policy.	
338 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 971	May 25	Records interview with M. Corbin and discussion of alternatives facing British and French Govts. in dealing with Ethiopian question at forthcoming meeting of League Council.	450
339 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 183	May 26	Reports that Herr Hitler is gradually moving away from any idea of conference or general settlement, and cares only for an Anglo-German understanding.	453
340 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 182	May 26	Refers to No. 336: only able to see Herr von Ribbentrop today: no hope of early German move emerged from long and unsatisfactory interview.	454
341 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	May 26	Note for Mr. Eden of a conversation with Mr. Mowrer, who reports all U.S. Consuls in Germany as convinced that Germany will make a European war within two years.	455
342 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 128 Saving	May 27	Reports that Herr von Ribbentrop on May 26 complained of publication of No. 307: told in reply that German M.F.A. responsible for leak which necessitated premature publication.	456
343 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 129 Saving	May 27	Refers to Nos. 339 and 340: thinks it hardly surprising in view of French and Anglo-Italian-Ethiopian situations that Herr Hitler declines to commit himself.	457
344 SIR E. OVEY Brussels No. 285	May 27	Transmits despatch by Military Attaché recording conversation with Chiefs of Belgian General Staff.	457
345 MR. THOMPSON Foreign Office	May 28	Stresses in a minute the inadvisability of hostilities against Italy in the Mediterranean at this stage.	459
346 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	May 28	Records conversation in which M. Corbin advised against visit of a British Minister to Berlin in existing circumstances.	460
347 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 674	May 28	Records statement by Signor Grandi as to Signor Mussolini's desire for improved Anglo-Italian relations based on restoration of confidence in the Mediterranean, reform of League, <i>détente</i> in Africa, and status quo for Austria: in reply, Mr. Eden defended H.M.G.'s recent policy.	460
348 To SIR N. HENDERSON Buenos Aires No. 246	June 2	Argentine Ambassador has explained his Govt.'s reasons for asking for early meeting of League Assembly.	465
349 MR. CRAIGIE Foreign Office	June 3	Records conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop concerning H.M.G.'s strong objection to German proposal to lay down two further 'A'-class cruisers in defiance of recent agreements.	466

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
350 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 699	June 3	Refers to No. 347: asks why Signor Mussolini does not give assurances about his intentions in Ethiopia to League: Signor Grandi indicates difficulties of this course, but emphasizes desire for <i>déente</i> .	469
351 MR. CRAIGIE Foreign Office	June 5	Notes that on May 29 Herr von Ribbentrop asserted that Germany was prepared to guarantee against attack in any circumstances frontiers of France, Belgium, and Holland.	471
352 MR. PETERSON Foreign Office	June 5	Records brief conversation between Mr. Eden and Emperor of Ethiopia at Prince's Gate, London. <i>Note 3.</i> Further conversation between Mr. Eden and Emperor on June 23.	472
353 To MR. BALDWIN	June 6	Letter from Mr. Eden recalling conversation in which M. van Zeeland asked for unobtrusive Anglo-Belgian staff talks on plans for defence of Belgium: favours early preliminary examination of this question by Minister for Coordination of Defence.	473
354 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	June 8	Memo. for Cabinet surveying present position of recent negotiations for an Anglo-Egyptian treaty and recommending concessions to meet Egyptian demands. <i>Note 13.</i> Summary of Cabinet discussions leading to draft treaty of June 26.	475
355 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	June 9	Record of conversation with Mr. Pirow: would like to talk to German Ministers, but only if accompanied by a British Minister: suggests a conference, including Germany and Italy, about future of Africa.	481
356 MR. WIGRAM Foreign Office	June 9	Record of conversation with Mr. Kirkpatrick, who thinks Germany in a year's time may feel herself strong enough to dictate terms.	482
357 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 140 Saving	June 10	Reports that M.F.A. have completed reply to British questionnaire: no hurry to deliver it.	483
358 To SIR S. BARTON Addis Ababa Tel. No. 309	June 11	His difficulties are appreciated, but he should avoid any course likely to lead to Italian demand for immediate withdrawal of legations.	483
359 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 368	June 11	Reports final interview with Signor Suvich: discussion of possibility of some spontaneous assurances by Italian Govt. to League.	484
360 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	June 11	Memo. for Cabinet discussing choice of courses before H.M.G. in connexion with maintenance of sanctions in Italo-Ethiopian dispute.	486

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
361 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	June 11	Note by Mr. Eden introducing F.O. memo. on problems facing H.M.G. in Mediterranean as result of Italo-League dispute.	492
362 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 376	June 12	Reports profound impression made by Mr. Chamberlain's and Mr. Baldwin's recent references to future of sanctions. <i>Note 1.</i> Quotes part of Mr. Chamberlain's speech of June 10.	501
363 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 141 Saving	June 12	Reports some general comments by Herr Hitler on advantage to Germany of British-Italian quarrel: reception of Countess Ciano; Austro-German relations; his anticipation of a brilliant future for himself.	502
364 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	June 12	Records conversation with M. Corbin who indicated that new French Govt. desire abandonment of sanctions at earliest possible moment.	503
365 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 687	June 12	Records cordial conversation with new M.F.A. and discussion of proposals for Italian approach to League in defining its role in Ethiopia.	504
366 To SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 325	June 13	Message for Khartoum via Cairo saying that Foreign Office will not oppose passage of some munitions into Western Abyssinia.	505
367 MR. KELLY Cairo Tel. No. 552	June 15	Forwards message from Captain Erskine from delegation of Galla chiefs appealing for British mandate for West Abyssinia.	506
368 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	June 15	Record of conversation with Mr. te Water who said that South African Govt. could not support raising of sanctions until Italian Govt. agreed to enter into negotiations.	506
369 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 192	June 16	Reports conversation with Baron von Neurath who indicated that early reply to H.M.G.'s questionnaire was unlikely.	508
370 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 384	June 17	Reports that Count Ciano has informed him that note to President of Assembly was still being drafted.	509
371 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 194	June 17	Refers to No. 369; he hears that Chancellor is in great form and has no intention of replying seriously to H.M.G.'s questions, feeling that present European situation is ideal for him.	509
372 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 209	June 17	Records interviews on June 12 and 15 with Signor Grandi, who reports Signor Mussolini's agreement to make a conciliatory declaration at Geneva.	510
373 To SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 151	June 19	Indicated to M. Corbin on June 17 his forthcoming statement about discontinuance of sanctions: M. Corbin told Sir R. Vansittart on June 18 that French Govt.	512

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		cannot commit themselves on this matter at short notice.	
		<i>Note 2.</i> Summary of Mr. Eden's statement in House of Commons on June 18 on discontinuance of sanctions against Italy and H.M.G.'s future policy in Mediterranean.	

CHAPTER V

German delay in reply to British questionnaire: meeting of Locarno Powers in London: report of the Plymouth Committee June 22-July 30, 1936

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
374 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 198	June 22	Has heard report that German reply should have been handed to him on June 19, but that Herr Hitler decided to await Geneva meetings.	514
375 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 395	June 22	Reports conversation with Herr von Hassell who thinks recent statement by Mr. Baldwin may have annoyed Herr Hitler.	515
376 MR. LEEPER Foreign Office	June 22	Records conversation with Mr. A. L. Kennedy of <i>The Times</i> who has returned from Germany convinced that H.M.G. should 'tell the Germans off' as firmly as possible.	516
377 TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1110	June 22	Reports that M. Corbin says French Govt. would like early meeting of Locarno Powers, including Italy.	517
378 MR. ASHTON-GWATKIN Foreign Office	June 23	Memo. suggesting that report of Plymouth Committee, recently completed, was in danger of being side-tracked.	518
379 SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 154 Saving	June 24	Reports advances made to Belgian Ambassador by Herr von Ribbentrop.	519
380 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	June 25	Records conversation with Mr. Pirow, who thinks that Germany should be given some hope of colonial gains, but not in Tanganyika or S.W. Africa.	519
381 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 730	June 25	Transmits report on re-fortification of Heligoland and instructs him to seek information thereon.	521
382 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Buenos Aires No. 273	June 25	Records a conversation between Lord Cranborne and Señor Malbrán as to procedure of Argentine representative at forthcoming League Assembly.	522
383 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 66	June 26	Mr. Eden records Rome message that Italian delegation will not take part in session of League Council opening today.	523

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
384	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 729	June 26	Records conversation about Anglo-Italian relations with Signor Bastianini.	524
385	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 65 L.N.	June 27	Mr. Eden records a conversation with M. Pouritch as to H.M.G.'s immediate and long-term plans in the Mediterranean: is unable to commit H.M.G. to any action in Central Europe.	526
386	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 167 Saving	June 27	Refers to speech by Herr von Ribbentrop at Munich on strength of Germany's position and continued lack of equal status.	528
387	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 73	June 28	Mr. Eden records conversation with M. Litvinov, who showed keen desire to bring Italo-Ethiopian dispute to rapid conclusion.	529
388	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 75 L.N.	June 28	Mr. Eden records conversation with M. Litvinov who referred to apprehension as to possibility of Western European arrangement at expense of East: Mr. Eden denied any such intention.	530
389	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 77 L.N.	June 28	Mr. Eden records conversation in which he assured M. Aras as to H.M.G.'s intention to maintain strength in Mediterranean.	530
390	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 82	June 30	Mr. Eden records conversation on June 29 at which Signor Scoppa showed him copy of Italian Govt.'s letter to League President justifying Italian policy and giving assurances concerning their Ethiopian policy.	531
391	SIR P. LORAINÉ Constantinople Tel. No. 41	June 30	For Mr. Eden at Geneva, describing his attempts to explain to Turkish Prime Minister the significance of Mr. Eden's declaration of June 18.	533
392	MR. S. D. WALEY Treasury	June 30	Memo. discussing validity of estimate by Mr. Churchill and others as to German expenditure on armaments.	534
393	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 89	July 1	Mr. Eden records conversation at dinner at which French and Belgian Ministers pressed strongly for meeting of Locarno Powers: he urges acceptance.	536
394	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 203	July 1	Baron von Neurath can still give no date for German reply to questionnaire: thinks delay not altogether unfortunate.	537
395	MR. EDEN Geneva	July 1	Text of his speech to League Assembly: comments on failure of sanctions policy: stresses willingness of H.M.G. to consider League reform and to cooperate in its tasks.	538

Note 2. Summary of 16th ordinary session of Assembly.

Note 5. Assembly's recommendation in Italo-Ethiopian dispute.

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
396	LORD SWINTON Air Ministry	July 1	Reports conversation with General Milch, who stressed danger from Russian air force of 4,500 first-line machines.	541
397	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 90	July 2	Mr. Eden records further conversation with M. Blum on subject of meeting of Locarno Powers: thinks his desire for meeting extremely reasonable.	543
398	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 427	July 2	Comments on possible reactions of Italian Govt. to an invitation to attend meeting of Locarno Powers.	544
399	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 164 Saving	July 2	Has heard that Herr Hitler is annoyed with H.M.G. owing to recent Paris speech by Mr. Duff Cooper and British action over Danzig question. <i>Note 1.</i> Summary of Mr. Duff Cooper's speech in Paris, June 24. <i>Note 2.</i> Summary of League debate on Danzig question: Herr Greiser's defiant gesture.	545
400	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 166 Saving	July 2	Reports Countess Ciano's message from her father to Herr Hitler, who was amiable but evasive.	547
401	SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin No. 677	July 2	Forwards memo. by Mr. Newton of conversation with Herr Dieckhoff on July 1 concerning reasons for continued German delay in replying to H.M.G.'s questions.	547
402	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 92 L.N.	July 3	Mr. Eden says that he has decided not to tell League members of appeal by Galla chiefs for British mandate (cf. No. 367).	549
403	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 94	July 3	Mr. Eden records conversation with M. van Zeeland who is convinced of need for joint approach to Germany through medium of a meeting of Locarno Powers.	550
404	TO MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 58	July 3	From Lord Cranborne for Mr. Eden saying that following Mr. Eden's message in No. 397 he got into touch with various Ministers and Mr. Baldwin who all agreed that early meeting of Locarno Powers was desirable: suggests procedure.	552
405	TO MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 61	July 3	Message from Sir R. Vansittart for Mr. Eden pointing out that M. van Zeeland's proposal to confine Locarno talks to Western settlement will lead to violent objections from Russia and Little Entente.	553
406	SIR S. HOARE Admiralty	July 3	Refers to No. 385 and points out to Mr. Eden that little increase in overall strength of Mediterranean Fleet is possible before 1939.	554
407	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 96	July 4	Mr. Eden records further discussion with French and Belgian Ministers, with agreement on <i>communiqué</i> announcing forthcoming meeting of Locarno Powers.	555
408	MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 207	July 4	Considers M. van Zeeland very optimistic in estimate of chances of German participation in meeting of Locarno Powers.	556

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
409 MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 208	July 4	Refers to No. 408 and suggests that Italy's participation in conference will facilitate German acceptance.	557
410 SIR P. LORAINÉ Constantinople Tel. No. 47	July 4	Reports that he has visited Angora and given Turkish P.M. further explanation as to the meaning of Mr. Eden's speech of June 18.	557
411 MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 103	July 6	Mr. Stevenson reports that Co-ordination Committee unanimously recommend ending of economic sanctions against Italy on July 15.	558
412 SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 49	July 6	Reports that M. van Zeeland now proposes July 22 for Locarno Powers' meeting.	559
413 SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 50	July 6	Refers to No. 405: has sounded M. van Zeeland on points raised therein, and finds his ideas entirely flexible.	559
414 MR. NEWTON Berlin No. 695	July 6	Reports statement by Herr Dieckhoff that Germany claims the right to fortify Heligoland and has begun to do so.	560
415 SIR E. CHATFIELD Admiralty	July 6	Letter to Sir R. Vansittart proposing first steps towards redistribution of Mediterranean fleet in view of imminent ending of sanctions. <i>Note 1. Foreign Office agrees.</i>	561
416 MR. ROBERTS Addis Ababa Tel. No. 414	July 7	Reports foiling of attempt by Italian carabinieri to occupy British Legation's wireless station: Marshal Graziani later admitted his instructions had been exceeded.	562
417 MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 216	July 7	Baron von Neurath will try again at end of week to extract reply from the Chancellor: does not desire an early meeting of all Locarno Powers.	563
418 To SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 67	July 7	Says that H.M.G. are prepared to agree to July 22 for Locarno Powers' meeting, object of which will be to facilitate a constructive approach to Germany. <i>Note 2. Summary of Cabinet discussion of July 6 agreeing to meeting.</i>	564
419 MR. BALFOUR Belgrade Tel. No. 34 Saving	July 7	Reports that Yugoslav officials are greatly heartened by evidence from Mr. Eden's recent speeches of H.M.G.'s continued interest in Mediterranean.	565
420 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 434	July 8	M. de Chambrun has received instructions to sound Count Ciano about Locarno meeting: received somewhat vague reply, and complaints about hostile implications of British Mediterranean agreements.	566
421 SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 52	July 8	Refers to No. 418: first reaction of Belgian ministers is entirely favourable.	567
422 MR. NEWTON Berlin No. 704	July 8	Encloses a minute by Col. Hotblack on the present state of the German Army.	567

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
423 To MR. ROBERTS Addis Ababa Tel. No. 347	July 9	Instructs him as to attitude to Italian authorities over use of wireless and cypher: he should protest but not resist <i>force majeure</i> ; strong representations are being made in Rome.	569
424 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 239	July 9	Instructs him to protest over infringement of British Legation's immunity at Addis Ababa.	570
425 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 241	July 9	Mr. Sargent explains to Signor Vitetti, who raised the matter informally, the true object of H.M.G.'s declaration regarding lesser Mediterranean Powers.	571
426 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 242	July 9	Sends information from D.N.I. to Naval Attaché regarding plans to return ships from Mediterranean to normal stations.	572
427 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 243	July 9	Refers to No. 426 and instructs him to call attention of Italian Govt. to these movements and their implication.	572
428 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 443	July 10	Reports that Count Ciano spoke enthusiastically of announced decision of H.M.G. to reduce Mediterranean fleet.	573
429 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 444	July 10	Reports Belgian Chargé d'Affaires has given his Govt.'s invitation to Italian Govt. to attend Locarno conference on July 22: no reply as yet.	574
430 To SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 69	July 10	Refers to Nos. 420 and 429: thinks Belgian soundings in Rome premature until French Govt. have agreed to programme.	575
431 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 246	July 10	M. Corbin suggests to Sir R. Vansittart that M. Aras has exaggerated extent of H.M.G.'s Mediterranean assurances: asks if Italy has demanded withdrawal of these: Sir R. Vansittart says she has not, and that such an approach would be considered foolish and tactless.	576
432 SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 55	July 10	Refers to No. 421: reports that Belgian M.F.A. has had no answer from Italy.	577
433 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 251	July 10	Informs him that withdrawal of air reinforcements despatched last autumn has begun.	578
434 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 252	July 10	Refers to No. 425: Signor Vitetti, on instructions from Italian Govt., asks whether H.M.G. regarded assurance to Mediterranean Powers as having lapsed with removal of sanctions.	578
435 MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 176 Saving	July 10	Reports inspired German press article stating that a Locarno meeting excluding Germany would have disastrous effect in Berlin.	579
436 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 451	July 11	Count Ciano states that Italian Govt. do not yet see their way to cooperate in Locarno meeting, and does not think even preliminary meeting without Germany of use.	579

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
437 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 253	July 11	Replies to Signor Vitetti's questions (see No. 434) by referring to his statement of June 18: assurances given by H.M.G. were unilateral and spontaneous.	581
438 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome No. 843	July 11	Records conversation on July 2 with Signor Grandi, who showed anxiety that Anglo-Italian relations should resume a more normal course.	582
439 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 450	July 12	Reports conversation in which Count Ciano again grumbles about continuance of H.M.G.'s Mediterranean guarantees: suggests that Italy might help by giving assurances of peaceful intention to smaller Mediterranean Powers.	583
440 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 454	July 12	Refers to No. 436: has received text of Italian answer to Belgian invitation: M. de Chambrun has had instructions to try to persuade Italian Govt. to change their mind.	585
441 SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 58	July 13	Sends text of proposed <i>communiqué</i> regarding conference of three Locarno Powers.	586
442 SIR E. OVEY Brussels Tel. No. 59	July 13	Refers to No. 441: M. Spaak thinks French Govt.'s assent is certain.	586
443 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 456	July 13	Does not think H.M.G.'s decision to increase naval forces in Mediterranean has caused serious feeling in Italy.	587
444 To SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 256	July 13	Refers to No. 439: approves his suggestion for an Italian declaration of peaceful intention.	587
445 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 458	July 13	Count Ciano says that Italian Govt. will act on suggestion to give assurances of peaceful intention to govts. of Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia.	588
446 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1224	July 13	M. Corbin told Sir R. Vansittart that French Govt. regard H.M.G.'s proposed terms of reference for Locarno Powers' meeting as having the appearance of running after Germany, and preferred the formula used in <i>communiqué</i> of July 3. <i>Encl.</i> : Note of July 10 setting out French Govt.'s views.	589
447 LORD HALIFAX Foreign Office	July 13	Note for the Foreign Policy Committee of Cabinet introducing memo. surveying (1) plans for the proposed meeting of Locarno Powers, and (2) British attempts to secure a general European settlement and appeasement.	591
448 SIR P. LORAINE Constantinople Tel. No. 59	July 14	Reports Turkish M.F.A. has received urgent enquiry from Italian Embassy as to whether assurances exchanged with H.M.G. had lapsed: later Italian Ambassador states that H.M.G. regards Mediterranean assurances as having lapsed.	599

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
449	SIR P. LORAINÉ Constantinople Tel. No. 60	July 14	Refers to No. 448: assumes Italian Ambassador's statement is impudent and mischievous fabrication: wishes if so to nail lie to counter.	600
450	MR. WALKER Athens Tel. No. 144	July 15	Refers to No. 448: asks about Greek Govt.'s action: surprised at its decision that assurances lapsed with raising of sanctions.	601
451	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Constantinople Tel. No. 139	July 15	Message from Sir R. Vansittart refers to Nos. 448 and 449: hopes to send text of reply to Turkish enquiry tomorrow; thinks M. Aras has misstated nature of H.M.G.'s agreement for mutual assistance.	602
452	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora Tel. No. 140	July 15	Refers to Nos. 448 and 449: Turkish Chargé d'Affaires has received reply on same lines as those of No. 437.	602
453	SIR G. CLERK Paris Tel. No. 194 Saving	July 15	Reports that Austro-German agreement of July 11 has strengthened M. Blum's conviction as to the importance of proposed Brussels meeting.	603
454	CABINET COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN POLICY F.P. (36) 2nd meeting	July 15	Meeting decides Locarno Powers' meeting should be held in London on July 22, and that text of two <i>communiqués</i> should be agreed beforehand. <i>Note 8.</i> Cabinet agrees on July 16 to above recommendations.	604
455	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1245	July 15	Describes conversation between Sir R. Vansittart and M. Corbin on proposed Locarno meeting: Sir R. Vansittart sees drawbacks in meeting without Italy.	608
456	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 464	July 16	Reports M.F.A. doubtful as to whether it can intervene over Marshal Graziani's decision about wireless transmission from Addis Ababa.	609
457	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Berlin Tel. No. 145	July 16	Prince Bismarck asked about prospect of meeting of Locarno Powers, and suggests preliminary meeting without Germany gravely prejudicial to her ultimate participation: Sir R. Vansittart suggested preliminary meeting would be purely formal.	609
458	TO MR. WALKER Athens Tel. No. 101	July 16	Refers to No. 450: he should tell Greek Govt. that H.M.G. have no complaints over their action as reported there.	610
459	MR. WALKER Athens Tel. No. 146	July 16	Refers to No. 450: gives different versions of Greek Govt.'s statement reported there.	610
460	TO SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1242	July 16	Reports a message from French Govt. delivered by M. Cambon on July 14 urging importance of holding proposed Locarno meeting in spite of Italian refusal: Mr. Sargent questioned whether there is sufficient business to justify a meeting.	611

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
461 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1247	July 16	Mr. Eden communicates decision of Cabinet as to holding of Locarno meeting: proposes London as meeting place and communicates text of two proposed <i>communiqués</i> .	612
462 MR. O'MALLEY Foreign Office	July 17	In letter to M. Örs says that H.M.G. do not wish to express any opinion on continuance or discontinuance of assurances given to France, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Greece in Dec. 1935.	614
463 MR. EDEN Foreign Office	July 17	In letter to Mr. Runciman outlines proposals for concessions, including access to colonial raw materials, abolition of imperial preference in the non-self-governing Empire, change in monetary policy, and tariff adjustment as economic basis for general agreement including Germany. <i>Note 2.</i> Summary of preceding discussions of this plan.	615
464 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1255	July 18	Refers to No. 461: M. Corbin states his govt.'s agreement to meeting in London and procedure proposed, subject to modifications of text of proposed <i>communiqués</i> .	620
465 SIR P. LORAINE Constantinople Tel. No. 71	July 19	Reports that he has seen acting M.F.A. and that whole position about Mediterranean assurances has now been cleared up. <i>Note 2.</i> In tel. No. 65 he attributes misunderstandings to ambiguity in Mr. Eden's speech of June 18.	624
466 SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	July 19	Minute deploring in strong terms Cabinet decision on July 16 to confine forthcoming Locarno discussions to western treaty.	625
467 To SIR P. LORAINE Constantinople Tel. No. 39	July 20	Refers to No. 465: some misapprehensions still exist in his mind: he should take no further action pending instructions.	627
468 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1270	July 20	Tells M. Corbin that after considering proposed French amendments to two <i>communiqués</i> he must ask French Govt. to accept them as they stand.	627
469 To SIR G. CLERK Paris No. 1271	July 20	M. Corbin reports French Govt. as agreeing to substance of two <i>communiqués</i> : discussions adjourned until next morning.	628
470 To SIR E. OVEY Brussels No. 373	July 20	Discusses text of <i>communiqués</i> with Belgian Ambassador.	629
471 To SIR P. LORAINE Constantinople Tel. No. 41	July 21	Refers to Nos. 465 and 467: sends explanations in order to remove discrepancies between his statements and H.M.G.'s views on Mediterranean assurances.	630
472 To MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 152	July 21	Gives Prince Bismarck copy of <i>communiqué</i> about three-power meeting, stressing its preliminary nature.	631

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
473	TO MR. INGRAM Rome No. 897	July 21	Gives Signor Vitetti copy of <i>communiqué</i> about three-power meeting: receives aide-mémoire on Italian Govt.'s assurances to Mediterranean powers.	632
474	SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 475	July 22	Count Ciano has assured French Ambassador that there was no general agreement between Italy and Germany.	633
475	SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 720	July 22	Forwards message from Mr. Erskine: Ras Imeru advises Emperor to surrender whole of Abyssinia to Italy, as resistance is impossible owing to Galla and tribal attitude.	634
476	LOCARNO POWERS MEETING 10 DOWNING STREET 10.30 a.m.	July 23	Record of conversation between British, French, and Belgian Ministers; draft <i>communiqué</i> drawn up stating intention to arrange meeting of five Locarno Powers as soon as convenient.	635
477	LOCARNO POWERS MEETING 10 DOWNING STREET 3.30 p.m.	July 23	Record of conversation between British, French and Belgian Ministers; general discussion about the European situation: Mr. Eden deprecated idea of early <i>coup de théâtre</i> by Germany.	639
478	MR. RUNCIMAN Board of Trade	July 23	Refers to No. 463 and rejects proposed economic measures as complete reversal of policy of H.M.G. since 1931.	644
479	MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 229	July 24	Reports that conclusions of three-power meeting of July 23 have been communicated to Herr Dieckhoff.	645
480	MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 230	July 24	Gives text of communication referred to in No. 479.	645
481	MR. NEWTON Berlin Tel. No. 231	July 24	Refers to Nos. 479, 480: Herr Dieckhoff is sure that communication will be well received by German Govt.: he thinks five-power conference might take place in September. <i>Note 3.</i> Herr von Neurath accepts invitation on behalf of German Govt.: thinks meeting unlikely before mid-October.	646
482	MR. INGRAM Rome Tel. No. 491	July 24	Reports that aide-mémoire on London meeting of July 23 has been presented to Count Ciano, who anticipates his Govt.'s acceptance of invitation to five-power conference.	646
483	SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 738	July 24	Reports on progress of negotiation of Anglo-Egyptian treaty: text of military clauses initialled this evening: hopes for early conclusion of remaining items. <i>Note 3.</i> Summarizes initialling of remaining clauses: treaty signed in London on Aug. 26, 1936.	647
484	CABINET COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN POLICY 10 DOWNING STREET 11 a.m.	July 27	Records consideration of draft statement to be made by Mr. Eden concerning transfer of colonial mandate or mandates to Germany: alternative proposed by Lord Halifax adopted.	648

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		<i>App.</i> : Text of statement of policy to be made by Mr. Eden on July 27.	
485 To MR. INGRAM Rome Tel. No. 296	July 28	Instructions to request Count Ciano to arrange for removal of restrictions on communications passing between H.M.G. and British Legation at Addis Ababa.	653
486 MR. INGRAM Rome Tel. No. 519	July 30	Refers to No. 485: saw Count Ciano who at once said that he had taken necessary steps to stop interference with cyphers in Ethiopia.	654

CHAPTER VI

The Montreux Conference and revision of the Lausanne Convention of 1923 January 6–July 19, 1936

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		Introductory Note	656
487 To SIR P. LORAINE Angora	Jan. 6	Letter from Sir L. Oliphant commenting on Turkish attitude to Straits question.	657
488 MR. STERNDALÉ BENNETT Foreign Office	Jan. 29	Minute indicating changing F.O. views as to Turkish Govt.'s desire to remilitarize the Straits.	658
489 To SIR P. LORAINE Angora No. 118	Mar. 24	Records conversation with M. Aras who made clear his Govt.'s desire to raise the question of the refortification of the Straits before the close of the Italo-Ethiopian war.	660
490 SIR P. LORAINE Angora Tel. No. 79	Apr. 4	Discusses possibility of Turkish <i>fait accompli</i> over remilitarization and advises prompt and favourable response by H.M.G. to request for discussion.	661
491 SIR P. LORAINE Angora No. 202	Apr. 10	Records conversations with Turkish Ministers and officials whom he advises against a <i>coup de main</i> over Straits question: is shown copy of intended Turkish Govt. communication to interested Powers. <i>Note 3.</i> Refers to Turkish Note of Apr. 11, 1936.	662
492 SIR P. LORAINE Istanbul Tel. Unnumbered	Apr. 11	Turkish Govt. fear Italian naval attack as reply to proposal for revision of Straits convention.	669
493 SIR E. DRUMMOND Rome Tel. No. 240	Apr. 14	Considers Turkish fears of Italian reaction to Straits proposal to be far fetched.	670
494 To BAY FETHI OKYAR Turkish Embassy London	Apr. 16	Mr. Eden refers to No. 491, note 3 in letter welcoming Turkish abstention from unilateral action, and promises H.M.G.'s prompt participation in discussions.	671

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
495	SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora Tel. No. 94	Apr. 23	M. Aras welcomes British note of Apr. 16, and asks for elucidation of three points.	672
496	SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora Tel. No. 95	Apr. 23	M. Aras' language shows continued fear of Italian <i>coup de main</i> : is advised to delay raising matter as long as possible, but if necessary to seek a mandate from guarantor Powers.	673
497	SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora Tel. No. 96	Apr. 24	Summarizes general Turkish apprehensions concerning Italian intentions and conviction that Turkish and British interests coincide.	674
498	SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora	Apr. 25	Letter to Sir L. Oliphant enclosing minute on Turkish attitude to Straits question and state of mobilization.	674
499	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora Tel. No. 88	Apr. 28	Rejects alarmist Turkish view of Italian intentions and advises strongly against any anticipatory <i>coup de main</i> .	676
500	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 58 L.N.	May 12	M. Aras has now suggested Straits conference at Montreux on June 22: was asked to put forward proposals for revision of Straits Convention: is anxious to work out proposals in consultation with H.M.G.	677
501	MR. RENDEL Foreign Office	May 13	Minute reporting Signor Mussolini's complaint to Turkish Ambassador in Rome of Turkish support of sanctionist policy but his apparent willingness to join Straits conference, with reservations.	679
502	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Angora Tel. No. 98	May 27	Summarizes discussion in F.O. with M. Menemencioğlu of conflicting Anglo-Turkish theses concerning control of international waterways: Turkish objections to plan for dividing conference into two stages.	679
503	MR. MORGAN Angora Tel. No. 135	June 12	Sends outline of Turkish proposal for Montreux Conference.	681
504	MR. EDEN Foreign Office	June 15	Memo. for Cabinet summarizing arrangements for Montreux Conference. <i>Note 4.</i> Gives details of arrangements for appointing officers of Conference and choice of British delegation.	682
505	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 3	June 22	Lord Stanhope forwards summary of proposals in new Turkish draft convention. <i>Note 3.</i> Brief account of first meeting of conference on June 22.	684
506	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 4	June 22	Lord Stanhope reports conversations with Japanese and Yugoslav delegates concerning imposition of total limit for tonnage passing from the Black Sea.	686
507	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 8	June 23	Lord Stanhope reports briefly on second session of conference. M. Litvinov emphasized special position of riparian powers.	688

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
508	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 10	June 24	Lord Stanhope reports difference of views with M. Litvinov on Turkish proposal to make Black Sea a <i>mare clausum</i> while allowing unlimited Soviet forces into Mediterranean.	688
509	To MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 2	June 25	Sir R. Vansittart sends Lord Stanhope Admiralty views on No. 508: thinks that there is no advantage in resisting Russian claim for freedom of egress.	690
510	MR. CUENOD Montreux No. 7	June 25	Encloses copy of a statement by M. Litvinov defending Soviet proposals with regard to limitation of tonnage of non-riparian states in the Black Sea and to freedom of egress for Black Sea states.	692
511	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 15	June 26	Reports views of M. Menemençioğlu concerning Soviet attitude on transit problem: he suggests sliding yardstick allowing right of ingress into Black Sea to increase in proportion to increase of any Black Sea fleet. <i>Note 2.</i> Summarizes conversation of Mr. Eden with M. Litvinov in Geneva and discussion of 'sliding-scale' plan.	693
512	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 78 L.N.	June 29	Mr. Rendel and Admiral Bellairs discuss sliding-scale and alternative proposals with Soviet and Turkish delegates.	694
513	MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 80 L.N.	June 29	Comment by Mr. Eden on the present state of the Montreux Conference: early and successful conclusion important: recommends 45,000 tons global maximum on sliding scale basis.	696
514	To MR. EDMOND Geneva Tel. No. 51	June 30	Refers to Nos. 512 and 513: Admiralty agree to Mr. Eden's proposals, but only if applied in peace and to neutral warships in war: still anxious for exemption from proposed yardsticks of belligerent vessels.	698
515	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 2 Saving	July 1	Mr. Rendel reports deadlock in discussion of sanitary dues enforced by Turkish authorities on foreign shipping.	698
516	MR. RENDEL Montreux	July 3	In a letter to Mr. Sterndale Bennett comments on redraft of Convention which U.K. delegation has prepared.	700
517	MR. CUENOD Montreux No. 16	July 5	Forwards copy of revised version, dated July 4, of Turkish draft convention of June 22.	702
518	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 20	July 6	Conference resumes plenary session: re-drafted convention accepted as basis of discussion: Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 considered.	709
519	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 26	July 7	Lord Stanley reports discussion at eighth session of Articles 11, 12, 13, and 14.	710
520	MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 25	July 8	Lord Stanley reports discussion at seventh session of Articles 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.	711

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521 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 27	July 8	Refers to No. 519: Lord Stanley reports discussion at eighth session of Article 15.	712
522 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 28	July 8	Lord Stanley reports opening of discussion at ninth session on U.K. redraft of Article 16: Soviet amendments considered: Turkish delegate fails to give promised support to U.K. delegation.	713
523 To MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 13	July 8	Forwards joint views of Admiralty and F.O. concerning three Soviet proposals on tonnage and transit rights: indicates possible concessions by U.K. delegation.	715
524 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 29	July 9	Lord Stanley comments on No. 522: discusses pros and cons of Russian amendment: points out acceptance would facilitate agreement on other matters.	716
525 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 30	July 9	Lord Stanley reports discussion of 'sliding-rule yardstick' and other outstanding issues with M. Litvinov.	717
526 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 34	July 9	Discusses French and Rumanian desire to see Black Sea open to themselves and closed to Germany: solution may be found in stressing Turkey's right to discriminate under certain treaty obligations.	719
527 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 35	July 9	Lord Stanley reports discussion at tenth session of Articles 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21.	719
528 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 37	July 9	Refers to No. 524: M. Menemencioglu states Turkish objection to Soviet amendment, in spite of previous silence: will remedy this in next discussion.	721
529 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 38	July 9	Refers to No. 525: M. Litvinov now proposes to omit figure of 60,000 tons: suggests new text: Lord Stanley proposes to agree.	722
530 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 41	July 10	Lord Stanley reports discussion at eleventh session of remaining Articles 22-6 of British draft.	722
531 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 42	July 11	M. Litvinov tells Sir A. Cadogan that large Soviet units cannot pass through Straits without escort: says Turks accept. <i>Note 2.</i> F.O. tel. No. 15 of July 13 says Admiralty does not attach importance to question of escorts.	725
532 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 43	July 12	Lord Stanley discusses possible conflict of responsibilities for Turkey over closing of Straits in view of H.M.G.'s objection to reference to obligations outside Covenant: Mr. Bruce doubts whether H.M.G.'s objections should be pressed.	726
533 LORD HALIFAX Foreign Office	July 13	Memo. for the Cabinet on proposed Soviet amendments to Articles 16 and 23 designed to discriminate against Germany:	727

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		indicates terms of a reasonable compromise.	
534 To MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 16	July 14	While disliking discrimination against Germany underlying Russian proposal regarding 'light surface vessels' thinks it may be necessary to accept in return for more important concession over supplementary pacts.	733
535 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 6 Saving	July 15	At plenary session this morning conference considered redraft of certain articles prepared by drafting committee.	734
536 To MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 18	July 15	H.M.G. are prepared to agree to conditions for closure of Straits in time of war, subject to agreement as to Turkey's responsibilities under League Covenant and supplementary pacts.	735
537 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 47	July 16	Lord Stanley reports that he has put forward amendment based on No. 536, with resulting complete change in situation.	736
538 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 48	July 17	Remaining clauses taken and agreed on at plenary session on afternoon of July 16.	737
539 To MR. NEWTON Berlin No. 1832	July 18	Has given explanation of decision of conference to Prince Bismarck, who thinks that his Govt. will feel some misgiving about the restriction of right of passage in peace time to 'light surface vessels'.	739
540 MR. CUENOD Montreux Tel. No. 53	July 19	Reports final consideration of text of convention on July 18 and plans for signature.	743
Appendix I		Cabinet discussion of the British questionnaire to Herr Hitler: (a) Extract from Cabinet Minutes of Apr. 29, 1936; (b) Extract from Cabinet Minutes of Apr. 30, 1936.	745
Appendix II		Cabinet Discussion of Plans for an Agreement with Germany: Extract from Cabinet Minutes of July 6, 1936.	752
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CHAPTER I

Consideration of plans for an oil embargo and a negotiated settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute: German remilitarization of the Rhineland: first reactions thereto

March 2–11, 1936

No. 1

Foreign Office¹ to Sir R. Lindsay² (Washington)

No. 60 Telegraphic [7 1945/1936/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 2, 1936, 4 p.m.*

'Times' Washington correspondent this morning³ quotes argument that United States Government have moved ahead of League because members of latter have not shut the door on Italian purchases of oil on credit and that United States oil may be purchased out of credits secured in Europe.

Fact is that in [*sic*] nearly fifty League countries (including Roumania, Mexico, Iran and Venezuela) have informed the League of Nations that financial sanctions are in force which prohibit granting of credit to Italian Government, corporations and individuals. There is no exemption from the sanctions for commercial credits as in case of United States legislation.

¹ Mr. A. Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had travelled to Paris on the evening of March 1, and after dining at the British Embassy had continued his journey on the night train to Geneva, where he was to attend the 5th session of the Committee of 18 (see Volume XV, No. 545, note 3). M. Flandin, French Minister for Foreign Affairs, left Paris for Geneva early on the afternoon of March 1.

² H.M. Ambassador at Washington.

³ The reference was to an article entitled 'America as a Neutral' in *The Times*, March 2, 1936, p. 13.

No. 2

Mr. C. A. Edmond¹ (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 3)

No. 14 Saving: Telegraphic [J 1977/587/1]

GENEVA, March 2, 1936

Following from Secretary of State.

M. Pouritch, the Yugoslav representative, came to see me this evening. He expressed his gratitude that I had made clear His Majesty's Government's attitude to the oil sanction,² and added that had I not done so it would have proved a disastrous day for the League. M. Pouritch stated that he had had several conversations with M. Flandin during the course of the day, and had found his policy indistinguishable from that of M. Laval.³ What the French were really frightened of was not Italy's departure from the League or that she would draw nearer to Germany, but that she would denounce the military agreement reached between Marshal Badoglio and General Gamelin.⁴ M. Pouritch maintained that M. Flandin would be in a very difficult position if he had to go back to Paris having lost this agreement, and having no other military agreement to put in its place.

M. Pouritch said that M. Flandin had maintained in conversation with him that my purpose was to make clear that the League could not be relied upon to take collective action in support of further sanctions against Italy, and then to return to my own country and convince public opinion that in such conditions the League was of no further use. M. Pouritch had seized this opening to exclaim that this could not be allowed, and that at all costs M. Flandin should anchor Britain to the League for without British support the League would be valueless. M. Flandin had seemed very uncomfortable during his conversation and M. Pouritch maintained that he was not pro-Italian, but was acutely conscious of his own embarrassments.

Repeated to Paris No. 9 (Saving) by bag, figures by post to Belgrade No. 1 (Saving) and Rome No. 7 (Saving).

¹ H.M. Consul at Geneva.

² Cf. No. 6 below.

³ French Minister for Foreign Affairs until January 1936.

⁴ See Volume XIV, No. 326, note 4. Marshal Badoglio and General Gamelin were respectively Chiefs of the Italian and French General Staffs; cf. No. 18 below.

No. 3

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 3)

No. 17 [J 1971/757/1]

GENEVA, March 2, 1936

The United Kingdom delegate to the League of Nations presents his compliments, and has the honour to transmit the record of an Anglo-French conversation respecting the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 3

*Record of an Anglo-French conversation, held at the Hôtel des Bergues, Geneva,
on March 2, 1936, at 11 a.m.*

PRESENT: *Great Britain:* Mr. Eden, Mr. Strang.¹

France: M. P. E. Flandin, M. Paul-Boncour (Minister of State),
M. René Massigli.²

Embargo on Supply and Transport of Oil to Italy

MR. EDEN began by informing M. Flandin of the decision reached by His Majesty's Government on the 26th February on the experts' report on the oil embargo, namely, that they were prepared to do whatever the Committee of Eighteen might decide, but that, so far as they were concerned, they were in favour of the imposition of an oil embargo by the members of the League, and thought that it ought to be applied as early as possible.³

M. FLANDIN asked whether the Italian Government had made representations to His Majesty's Government in the same sense as to the French Government, namely, that if there were any extension of sanctions Italy would leave the League.

MR. EDEN said that no such representations had been received. The only recent communication he had had from the Italian Ambassador was in regard to the Naval Conference.⁴

M. FLANDIN explained that the representations had been made both by Signor Mussolini⁵ to the French Ambassador in Rome⁶ and by the Italian Ambassador in Paris⁷ to himself. Signor Mussolini had assured the French Ambassador that there was no truth whatever in the rumour of an Italo-German understanding, but he had added that, if Italy were driven into a position of isolation, she would find some means of extricating herself from this situation.⁸ The extension of sanctions would lead to war, and for this the small nations would be more responsible than France and Great Britain. Signor Mussolini had also stated in categorical terms that, if there were any further extension of sanctions, Italy would leave the League of Nations, would not sign a naval agreement and would denounce the military agreements which Marshal Badoglio had made with General Gamelin.⁹

MR. EDEN said that the effect of this was that the aggressor was to choose what sanctions were to be applied.

M. MASSIGLI suggested that the real question was whether the oil embargo would be effective or not.

¹ Counsellor in the Foreign Office and Adviser on League of Nations Affairs.

² Assistant Director, and head of the League of Nations Division, in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

³ See Volume XV, No. 557. In another account of this conversation Mr. Eden remarked that this information 'I think came somewhat of a shock to M. Flandin'.

⁴ Cf. Volume XIII, Nos. 676, 677, 680, 681, 684, and 685.

⁵ Head of the Italian Government.

⁶ M. le Comte de Chambrun.

⁷ Signor Cerruti.

⁸ Cf. *D.D.F.*, Series 2, vol. i, No. 239.

⁹ See No. 2, note 4.

MR. EDEN said that, if the oil embargo was not going to be effective, it was difficult to understand why Signor Mussolini was making so much noise about it. If the Committee of Eighteen did not impose the oil embargo, what were they going to do? Were they merely to say that the oil embargo would not work, and then disperse? This would expose the League to great criticism. It might also turn people's thoughts to alternative sanctions, like the shipping sanction, which were much more dangerous than the oil sanction.

M. FLANDIN said that there were two tests. Would the oil embargo be effective or not? Would the damage to the League be greater if an ineffective sanction were put on and Italy left the League, or if the League decided that the oil embargo could not be effectively applied? He greatly preferred the second risk.

MR. EDEN said that the decision was a difficult one to take. If the League proved itself ineffective on this occasion, the sanctions front would break. It was difficult to say how far an embargo by League members would be effective. It would certainly not stop the war, though it might perhaps make Italy's oil supply more expensive and difficult to obtain. The United States were unlikely to take any steps to make the embargo effective, but at the same time it was important to keep the United States public well disposed towards the League.

M. FLANDIN said that he feared the departure of Italy from the League. If the oil embargo was going to be effective and deprive the aggressor of the fruits of victory, he could see the point of applying it. But an ineffective oil embargo, accompanied by Italian victories in the field, would make the League look ridiculous.

MR. EDEN thought that the League would also look ridiculous if it did nothing now.

M. FLANDIN said that it was important not to underestimate the effectiveness of the existing sanctions, particularly the financial sanction. Their effect upon Italian economy was likely to be serious.

MR. EDEN said that, nevertheless, they were not likely to stop the fighting before the end of the present year.

M. FLANDIN doubted whether the oil embargo would help towards this end.

MR. EDEN said that he also would deplore the departure of Italy from Geneva. He was still puzzled as to why, if the oil embargo was not going to be effective, Signor Mussolini made so much fuss about it.

M. FLANDIN said that he had put the question to the Italian Ambassador in Paris, who had replied that Italy was being flayed alive, and that every additional sanction would aggravate her situation. From the moral point of view, sanctions were quite inadmissible. They had brought opinion to a high pitch of excitement and had united the Italian people around Signor Mussolini.¹⁰

¹⁰ Foreign Office comments show marked uneasiness at the course of this conversation. Mr. M. D. Peterson, Counsellor in the Foreign Office, referred in a minute of March 4 to

MR. EDEN said that the psychological factor was difficult to assess. It might well be that sanctions had this effect at the beginning. But there were some who thought that they were now having a depressing effect and that if the pressure were not maintained the Italian people would take heart again. As regards alternative sanctions, he thought that an embargo on port facilities would be a serious matter, and he did not want this question taken up at present. Would it not calm Signor Mussolini's state of mind if it were made clear that for the moment the Committee of Eighteen did not intend to study any further means of pressure in addition to oil? This would, however, be for the Committee of Eighteen itself to decide.

M. FLANDIN asked whether Mr. Eden intended to propose an oil embargo?

MR. EDEN said that he hoped that this would not be necessary. It would be best to arrange matters privately in advance and not to have any difficulties in public.¹¹

M. PAUL-BONCOUR thought that the recent Italian victories would be an important factor in the situation.

MR. EDEN thought that the effect might be to influence the Members of the League to take further action.

M. FLANDIN asked whether the time had not come for a new peace move at Rome? The French Ambassador in Rome had reported that [*sic*] the publication on the 1st March in the *Popolo d'Italia* of an important article which seemed to bear the marks of inspiration from Signor Mussolini. In this article it was stated that a settlement might now be reached sooner than people expected. Everything might be over in six weeks. Old accounts between Italy and Abyssinia had been settled at Amba Alagi,¹² both morally and from the military point of view. There was no reason why there should not be a settlement before the rains. If a costly expedition was to be continued, this would be the fault of the sanctionist countries.

MR. EDEN said that this kind of situation arose every time there was a question of a new sanction. Perhaps, however, this time the end really was coming nearer. He still thought it would be a good idea to fix a date for the application of the oil embargo, and to see whether negotiations could not be started in the meantime so as to avoid the application of the embargo.

M. FLANDIN said that now that Italy had cleared up the situation from a military point of view, she might be ready to negotiate on the basis of the

M. Flandin's 'extraordinary denunciation of sanctions' at this point, and made the general comment, 'M. Flandin seems to be little if at all better than M. Laval'. Mr. R. C. S. Stevenson, Assistant Adviser on League of Nations Affairs, suggested, however, that the denunciation of sanctions referred to 'was, I think, a quotation from M. Cerruti's representations to M. Flandin'.

¹¹ Mr. Peterson commented: 'The Secretary of State . . . was still following the lines of the Cabinet Conclusions [cf. Volume XV, No. 545, note 3]. It was subsequently and . . . apparently after telephonic communication with London that he decided to come out in the open and propose the oil sanction.'

¹² Amba Alagi was occupied by Italian troops on February 28 without fighting; Ethiopian forces withdrew after their flank had been exposed by the defection of a large body of Gallas and other tribesmen. The point marked the furthest limit of Italian advance in 1895.

Committee of Five's report.¹³ Would it not be well to make an appeal to Italy first, and only put on the oil embargo if she refused the appeal?

M. MASSIGLI said that a few days could be spent at Geneva discussing the experts' report on existing sanctions, and also, if necessary, the oil report from a technical point of view.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR agreed, and said there would be an advantage to gain in a few days on technical work.

M. FLANDIN suggested that before the Committee of Eighteen took a decision some sort of an appeal should be addressed to Rome, perhaps by France and Great Britain.

MR. EDEN said that France and Great Britain ought not to act alone. In any event, this was the function, not of the Committee of Eighteen, but of the Committee of Thirteen.

M. FLANDIN said that as a result of a meeting of Ministers in Paris before he left, France could not herself agree to impose an oil embargo in the face of the categorical statements which had been made to the French Ambassador by Signor Mussolini.

MR. EDEN reverted to a suggestion that a date should be fixed to an oil embargo three weeks ahead, and that an appeal should be made in the meantime to Signor Mussolini.

M. FLANDIN said that he did not know what views the Italian Government might hold as to the terms of a settlement. They might well go beyond the report of the Committee of Five, or even the Paris proposals.¹⁴ It was conceivable that, if the present Emperor disappeared, the new Emperor might be prepared to treat with Italy on her terms.

MR. EDEN said the question was how much Signor Mussolini would need the assistance of the League in Europe.

M. FLANDIN said that he could not believe that Signor Mussolini was bluffing, in the face of his unequivocal official statements.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR said that there was a serious risk of an Italo-German rapprochement.

MR. EDEN said he doubted whether Germany was very anxious for an Italian connexion.

M. FLANDIN said that the next step would then be that Germany would go back on Locarno, and demand a reform of the League.

MR. EDEN said that he did not think there was much use in having a League which could not do anything except with the permission of the aggressor.

M. FLANDIN replied that in that event they might just as well have put on military sanctions.

MR. EDEN recalled that it had been agreed to proceed step by step.

M. FLANDIN said that Members of the League had made a mistake in imposing mild sanctions. Article 16 ought to have been applied as a whole, or not at all. M. Flandin asked whether His Majesty's Government had received the news of the Italian victories and of Signor Mussolini's threat to leave the League before they had taken their decision.

¹³ Cf. Volume XIV, No. 641, note 4.

¹⁴ See Volume XV, No. 336.

MR. EDEN replied that they had not, but he did not think that the news would have weakened their attitude, but rather have strengthened it.

M. FLANDIN said that France did not want to see the League weakened by Italy's departure. If the oil embargo could be made really effective, he would have said that they could go ahead with it.

Had Mr. Eden any idea as to the possible basis for peace?

MR. EDEN said that he could only suggest the report of the Committee of Five, in which there was plenty of room for manœuvre. It provided for both League assistance and for an exchange of territory.¹⁵ The chief fault in the Paris proposals had been the large area in the south of Abyssinia allotted for a disguised Italian occupation. He thought that a better basis would be a frank exchange of territories.¹⁶

M. FLANDIN asked whether Mr. Eden had any views as to the limits of such an exchange?

MR. EDEN said that perhaps the Emperor would be willing to give more in exchange than he had previously been. In any event this would be for the Committee of Five, or some other League body, to arrange, rather than for the French and British Governments.

M. FLANDIN thought that the proposal to the parties might be (1) the suspension of hostilities, and (2) negotiations on the basis of the report of the Committee of Five.

He suggested that the question should be explored further in the course of to-day. Would it be possible to sound the Italian Government in an unofficial way?

MR. EDEN said that it would be better if the approach were made by the Committee of Thirteen. Any other kind of approach would be dangerous. He again proposed that the Committee of Eighteen should fix a date for the oil embargo, and that, in the meantime, the Committee of Thirteen should approach the parties.

M. FLANDIN thought that this was too much like an ultimatum to Italy.

(The conversation then turned to other subjects.)

¹⁵ Mr. Peterson commented on this sentence: 'I venture to think the Secretary of State is definitely mistaken. The Committee of Five has never proposed to take direct cognisance of an exchange of territory but has left this to the two parties under the supervision of the French and British Governments.'

¹⁶ Mr. Peterson commented at this point: '... the Secretary of State expresses a view as to the terms of peace which I have never been able to understand, although it undoubtedly figured prominently in the House of Commons debate last December. The idea that the permanent cession to Italy of Amharic territory conquered by military action constitutes less of a "prime d'aggression" [*sic*] than the granting of economic rights even approximating to a veiled occupation in non-Amharic territory which has not been overrun by Italian troops is one which I find it hard to agree with. Any "exchange of territory" is—as the Cabinet, but not the House of Commons, noticed in December—ruled out by the Zeila proposal.' The reference is apparently to the Debate on the Address, December 10, 1935; see 307 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 817–60.

Note by Mr. Eden on the Air Pact for the Cabinet Committee on Germany
[C 1352/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 2, 1936

I circulate to the Committee a memorandum on the Air Pact,¹ drawn up by the Foreign Office in consultation with the Air Ministry and the War Office.

A. E.

I. History of the Question

At the Anglo-French meeting in London on the 3rd February, 1935, it was agreed 'to invite Italy, Germany and Belgium to consider with the British and French Governments whether a convention might not be promptly negotiated,' by which 'the signatories would undertake immediately to give the assistance of their Air Forces to whichever of them might be the victim of unprovoked aerial aggression by one of the contracting parties . . .'²

II. Future of the Negotiations

6. If it is decided to try to come to some general working arrangement with Germany in concert with France, it will be necessary to find means of opening up the conversation. We must first be clear that we are ready to discuss the Air Pact with the other Powers concerned, apart, if necessary, from the question of air limitation, for, owing to the difficulties inherent in this subject, which are by no means only of Germany's making, it may well prove impossible to initiate any discussion on the latter question (the difficulties of which are pointed out in a separate memorandum—G(36)5 of the 2nd March, 1936).³ Through the last year it has always been supposed that the Air Pact would not be concluded, though it might be discussed, independently of the conclusion of an air limitation agreement and, indeed, of the general settlement foreshadowed in the London Declaration of February 1935.⁴ Apart from the fact that we have given pledges to the French in this sense, the Chiefs of Staffs, for reasons which need not be elaborated in this

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as G(36)4.

² See Volume XII, pp. 483-4. The following paragraphs 2-5 are omitted. They summarize the course of the negotiations for an air pact described in Volumes XII, XIII, and XV of this Series, and conclude by referring to the statement of the British Government's views which was made privately in writing to the German Ambassador, Herr von Hoesch, on January 27, 1936: see Volume XV, No. 478, note 7 and Annex.

³ Not printed. Paragraph 14 of this memorandum summarized the 'difficulties' as follows. '(1) The definition of the category or categories of air power and strength to which limitation is to be applied. (2) The definition of the basis and area of limitation. (3) The question of fleet aircraft. (4) The question of supervision. (5) The question of the Powers to whom limitation is to apply.'

⁴ Volume XII, No. 400, note 4 and Annex.

memorandum, recommended in paper 1161B of the 8th February, 1935,⁵ 'that the proposed guarantee treaty should not be concluded or, at any rate, ratified until the armaments part of the settlement has been negotiated.' On the other hand, in paper C.P.129(35) of the 21st June, 1935,⁶ the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and Air recommended that 'if, in the course of the negotiations, it were found that the conclusion of an air pact were possible, but that the conclusion of a limitation agreement were either impossible or indefinitely postponed, then we are clearly of opinion that we ought to go for the conclusion of the air pact in order that we may get one positive objective at any rate in our negotiations.'

7. A decision then to open immediate discussions on an Air Pact, which, if they took place, might well lead to its conclusion independently of air limitation in view of the difficulties of the latter, seems to necessitate in the first place reconsideration of the Chiefs of Staff's recommendation of February 1935. Are we prepared to discuss the Air Pact with the possibility that these discussions may lead to agreement when it may, in fact, prove impossible even to discuss air limitation, much less to come to an agreement upon it?

8. Once we were clear that there was no objection to the separate conclusion of the Air Pact, on which discussions are, in fact, already engaged, it might well prove a better subject than any other on which to open the conversations, and a new attempt might be made to resume discussions on it with the German Government. We would presumably say that, despite Herr Hitler's⁷ view expressed to Sir E. Phipps in December and January,⁸ it does not seem to us impossible to discuss the question of the Air Pact even whilst the war is proceeding in Abyssinia. We would then ask him to authorise us to tell the French Government that they are prepared to discuss the Air Pact accompanied by bilateral arrangements for its execution. It is possible that the German Government would reply that, if we continue to press for bilateral arrangements, they will raise the question of the continuance of the demilitarised zone; but in many respects such a reply might be to the good, as it would enable us to secure the opening of the whole negotiation which we have in mind.

9. It might have been thought that, in the interests of symmetry and to avoid a multiplication of documents, the essential elements of the Air Pact itself could have been included in a revised version of the Locarno Treaty. But in practice such an attempt, even if it were acceptable from the point of view of public opinion, would probably raise very considerable drafting difficulties, and it seems clear that, whatever the fate of the demilitarised zone, we must reconcile ourselves, as originally proposed, to the negotiation of an Air Pact separate from and in addition to the Locarno Treaty.

10. In that case it still remains—in accordance with our promise to the

⁵ Not printed.

⁶ Volume XIII, No. 364.

⁷ President and Chancellor of the German Reich.

⁸ See Volume XV, Nos. 383, 450, and 456. Sir E. Phipps was H.M. Ambassador at Berlin.

French of the 22nd July, 1935⁹—to secure the German Government's consent to the principle of the accompaniment of the Air Pact by bilateral arrangements. These, as has already been privately suggested to the German Ambassador, might be so framed as to provide for mutual inspection of the air forces of one of the contracting parties by the Air Attaché of another of the contracting parties so as to ensure that the former's air force is adequately equipped to render assistance. It might be hoped that in this form the German Government would not be able to claim that the arrangements (the form of which might actually be laid down in the Air Pact) were in any way inconsistent with the letter or spirit of the Locarno Treaty. On the other hand, the French Government might ultimately be persuaded to accept them, seeing that they would, in fact, without any mention of the point, provide a means of obtaining what we regard as the only advantage of a bilateral arrangement between France and ourselves, viz., the indication of aerodromes for the use of our bombing machines if required to operate against Germany, and, in the case of an arrangement concluded between ourselves and Belgium, the indication of such aerodromes and the exchange of information between the Observation Services. In this form the negotiation of bilateral arrangements might present less difficulty, and their [*sic*] would, so far as their contents were concerned at any rate, be no objection to their discussion *à cinq* as laid down by Herr Hitler.

11. Once we had secured the German consent to the opening of the negotiation on these conditions, the French having already consented, it would presumably be necessary to clear up, probably through the diplomatic channel, the following three questions:

- (1) Which of the proposed signatories are to give guarantees and which are to receive them?
- (2) What are the circumstances in which the guarantees will operate?
- (3) What reference is possible in the Air Pact to the desirability of the prohibition of indiscriminate bombing?

To these questions we proposed last July to answer that

- (1) So far as His Majesty's Government are concerned, they only propose to guarantee Belgium and France against Germany and Germany against Belgium and France. They desire to receive guarantees from Belgium and France against Germany and from Germany against Belgium and France. They do not expect Belgium and France to guarantee any country against the United Kingdom other than Germany, or Germany to guarantee any country against the United Kingdom other than France and Belgium.
- (2) The guarantees given to France and Belgium against Germany, and to Germany against France and Belgium should operate where there has been an air attack which constitutes unprovoked aggression and a violation of Article 2 of the Treaty of Locarno. A similar

⁹ Volume XIII, No. 420.

solution could be adopted as regards the other guarantees to be given.

- (3) In order to avoid any suggestion that the Air Pact legitimizes indiscriminate bombing attacks, His Majesty's Government suggest the insertion of a paragraph in the preamble, which might be on the following lines:

'anxious in particular to safeguard the civil populations of their countries against the danger of indiscriminate attacks from the air, which they recognise are contrary to the Law of Nations.'

12. In addition to these questions there are two others which, like those enumerated in the preceding paragraph, might eventually require a preliminary elucidation through the diplomatic channel; but in the first place His Majesty's Government have to define their attitude thereon. These questions are:

- (1) Are the guarantees to apply to territory only or to fleets and merchant shipping on the high seas?
- (2) Are Powers other than the five Powers in any way to be approached in connexion with the Pact?

As regards question (1) the Foreign Secretary and the Air Minister in a joint memorandum of the 21st June last (C.P.129(35))⁶ recommended that in their opinion 'a deliberate air attack against the ships of any of the parties to the Pact could only be an act of war; and it is for this reason that we recommend that the Air Pact (though confined to Europe) should cover such a case of unprovoked aggression outside as well as inside territorial waters. Otherwise we should be deprived of the assistance of the other parties to the Pact in such an eventuality. We think the better course would be not to provide for this eventuality in specific terms but to employ a general expression which would cover the case of a deliberate air attack on ships (or aircraft) outside territorial waters.' The Admiralty never definitely concurred in this recommendation; and on the 26th June the Cabinet decided to reserve their views on the matter.

As regards question (2) the joint memorandum by the Foreign Secretary and Air Minister of the 21st June (C.P.129(35)) stated that the two Ministers would circulate their views to the Cabinet at a later date. This they never, in fact, did; and the latest report on the subject is that of the Chiefs of Staff of which the C.I.D. took note on the 6th December, 1935 (C.I.D. No. 1201B).¹⁰ The conclusion of that report reads as follows:

'As Holland in its present undefended condition is merely a temptation, we should be unwise to encourage her to become a member of the Air Convention unless she undertakes to take every possible step for her own defence.'

The matter has not been carried further since that stage; and if it were

¹⁰ Not printed. Cf. Volume XV, No. 325.

thought necessary to reconsider it a fresh reference to the C.I.D. would presumably be required.

13. When these questions had been settled, the way would be clear for a meeting of the Legal Advisers of the five Powers to draft the text of the Pact. It will be seen from the earlier part of this memorandum that three separate drafts—those of Britain, France and Germany—are in fact available.

14. In conclusion a brief reference may be made to the advantages which the Air Pact might be expected to secure for this country. These seem to be as follows:

- (1) The French (and Belgian) and German guarantees which would accrue to Britain under the Air Pact, but are not secured to her by Locarno.
- (2) The immediacy of the aid to be furnished to the complainant party in the event of air attack upon his territory by the air force of another of the contracting parties, an immediacy which might be increased by the bilateral arrangements. It should, however, be borne in mind that absolute reliance cannot be placed upon immediacy of action, since each Power must be free to decide for itself whether the circumstances constitute an aggression requiring such immediacy.

No. 5

Note by Mr. Eden for the Cabinet Committee on Germany on the possibility of further limitation of armaments on land

[C 1354/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 2, 1936

I circulate to the Committee a memorandum on the possibility of further limitation of armaments on land,¹ drawn up by the Foreign Office in consultation with the War Office.

A. E.

I. History of the Question

1. To understand the present position it is necessary to go back to the British Memorandum of the 29th January, 1934, in which we proposed parity in effectives as between France, Germany and Italy at a figure somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 men, and limitation of tanks to 16 tons and of mobile land guns to 155 mm. This proposal was accepted by the German Government on the 16th April, 1934, on the understanding that the

¹ Circulated to the Committee as G(36)9. The paper was drafted by Mr. R. F. Wigram, Counsellor in the Foreign Office and head of the Central Department, who minuted on February 28: 'I have had a good deal of trouble over this with the War Office—and am not too satisfied with the memorandum. But I think we are all agreed—British Govt. Depts., French and Germans—that further limitation of land armaments is dead. Therefore perhaps this is the best that can be produced.'

figure for effectives would be 300,000 men. This was immediately followed by the French refusal to continue negotiations; and the next important development was the passage of the so-called two-year Military Service Bill through the Chamber on the 15th March, 1935. The object of this Bill (subsequently passed by the Senate) was to maintain the total strength of the French Army, including native and colonial troops in France and overseas, at a strength of 545,000 officers and men.

2. On the 16th March, 1935, came the passage of the German military decree re-introducing conscription in Germany and fixing the peace establishment of the German Army at thirty-six divisions, with a strength of 550,000 men. In his speech of the 21st May, 1935, Herr Hitler stated that 'the German Government have made known the size of the new German Army. Under no circumstances will they depart from this.' It has seemed clear since May last that the German Government do not any longer believe in the possibility of any general limitation of land effectives. On the other hand, in his speech of the 21st May, Herr Hitler said that 'the German Government are ready to agree to any limitation leading to the abolition of the heaviest weapons . . . such as the heaviest artillery and the heaviest tanks.' (N.B.—The French warned us in a memorandum of March 1935 that they could not consider limitation of material while Germany maintained the figure fixed for her Army on the 16th March. Such a limitation, they said, would merely rebound to the disadvantage of France, whose existing superiority in material, i.e., heavy guns and tanks, would thereby be destroyed.)

3. During the summer of 1935 there was some quite inconclusive discussion between ourselves and the French Government as to the possibility of further limitation of land armaments. The only element in these discussions worth recalling here is a suggestion which we instructed His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris² on the 16th August, 1935, to put to the French Government in the following terms: 'We must assume that the German peace establishment of thirty-six divisions is fixed and unalterable and that the total number to be incorporated in those divisions—550,000 men—is only susceptible of reduction in the eventuality, now clearly most improbable, of other Powers reducing from their present strengths. On the other hand, we are led to understand that the present law will probably give France by the end of 1936 a peace establishment in Metropolitan France and North Africa of 540,000 men; and that a two-year service law fully applied might at the end of the "lean years" in 1940 give a peace establishment of 600,000 men in France alone. In the face of these facts and estimates, do the French Government see any prospect of some limitation or stabilisation of strengths as between France and Germany on the basis of the thirty-six divisions and some French strength resulting from a form of two-year service?' No expression of opinion was ever received from the French Government on this suggestion; and the only concrete proposal submitted by the French Government on the question of land armaments during 1935 is one contained in the French Memorandum

² Sir G. Clerk.

of the 21st June to the effect that a limitation agreement might be reached as regards 'programmes of manufacture.'³

II. *Future of the Negotiations*

4. The consequences of the failure of France to face the facts in the matter of the limitation of armaments are set out in Part I of this paper, and the chances of being able to arrive at any satisfactory agreement now, when Germany is in the full swing of rearmament and the Franco-Soviet Treaty is about to be ratified, do not appear to be promising.

5. In spite of M. Laval's statement to Mr. Eden on the 27th June, 1935,⁴ to the effect that the limitation of land armaments is nine-tenths of the whole problem for France, the French General Staff consider that such limitation offers no appreciable military advantage to France and might well be a disadvantage. They point out that in war effectives depend upon the size of the populations of the belligerents, and that under the Nazi régime in Germany and the system of pre-military training it is not possible to limit their strength.

6. As regards material the French General Staff do not admit that it can be divided for purposes of limitation into offensive and defensive types. They are not now prepared to consider the limitation of heavy material in tanks and artillery, because this would reduce the offensive value of the French Army, and might completely nullify it, if the Germans built a system of frontier fortifications in the Rhineland similar to that of the French. They maintain that any diminution in the offensive strength of the French Army would react adversely on the weaker Powers in Europe who now look to France to assist them against the possible encroachments of Germany, since it would be likely to give rise to the suspicion that France would be incapable of fulfilling her engagements should the necessity for doing so arise. Thus, the limitation of armaments would benefit Germany and not France.

7. A further disadvantage of an agreement for the limitation of land armaments from the point of view of the French General Staff is that it might create a false sense of security and lead to a demand by public opinion in France for the reduction of military expenditure to a dangerously low level.

8. To the argument that, if no agreement for limitation is reached, it can only be a matter of a few years before the German Army is stronger than the French, both in effectives and in material, the answer of the French is that it may be quite a long time before this happens owing to the restrictions imposed by the financial and economic situation in Germany. The only proposals for limitation which the French General Staff are prepared to consider are those which they think would automatically result from a system

³ The negotiations summarized in this section are dealt with in detail in earlier volumes of this series: see particularly Volume VI, Chapters IV, V, and VI, Volume XII, Chapter IV, and Volume XIII, Chapters III, IV, V, and VI.

⁴ The statement was in fact made by M. Léger, Secretary General of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs: see Volume XIII, p. 491.

of (1) *préavis* or publication in advance of programmes of construction, and (2) advance publicity for budgetary credits. They would require such a system to be subject to international supervision with local inspections. As regards (1), it might be possible to devise a system of international supervision which would furnish some sort of a check on declared programmes in peace time; but it would not be possible to guarantee an effective check on the creation of reserves of armament stores nor the increase in war potential derived from efficient industrial mobilization plans. As regards (2), limitation of budgetary credits, this would be impossible to check since expenditure on armaments could not only easily be concealed under other headings of a budget, but could be financed in other ways.

9. It is clear, therefore, that as far as the French General Staff are concerned, they do not believe in the possibility of limiting effectives and they are opposed to any limitation of land armaments in spite of M. Laval's statement that this is nine-tenths of the whole problem of France. Therefore, whatever attitude His Majesty's Government adopt towards limitation of land armaments will have little effect in producing agreement between France and Germany. If France and Germany could reach an agreement for limitation, His Majesty's Government would have no difficulty in accepting it both quantitatively and qualitatively. Perhaps the best hope for the future lies in the maintenance of a kind of equilibrium between the two Powers on the basis of the German peace establishment of 36 divisions—a total of 550,000 effectives—and the French peace establishment, which, under two years' service, will yield about 600,000 effectives by 1940.

10. The failure of France and Germany to reach agreement does not, however, constitute a reason for refusing to embark on negotiations for either an air pact or an air limitation agreement, if prospects for these negotiations are otherwise favourable.

No. 6

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 3, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 15 L.N. Telegraphic [J 1940/757/1]

GENEVA, March 3,¹ 1936, 1.30 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

My telegram No. 14.²

I had a further meeting with Monsieur Flandin and Monsieur Avenol³ after lunch today⁴ as a result of which the following procedure was agreed upon between us.

At the meeting of Committee of Eighteen this afternoon, after the Committee had disposed of some of its work in connexion with existing sanctions, Monsieur Flandin would propose before the Committee of Eighteen began

¹ The day of despatch of this telegram was given as March 2, presumably in error.

² Not printed: it summarized No. 3.

³ Secretary General of the League of Nations.

⁴ i.e. March 2.

discussion of question of an oil embargo a further attempt should be made to bring an end to hostilities by agreement arrived at within the framework of the Covenant. He would suggest that Committee of Thirteen should be called together at once to examine the situation.

The idea is that Committee of Thirteen should agree upon terms of a message to be sent immediately to the two parties calling upon them to cease hostilities and to open negotiations for a settlement. If no satisfactory reply were received within a short period say 48 hours the Committee of Eighteen would meet again to take a decision upon oil embargo.

At meeting of Committee of Eighteen this afternoon⁵ Monsieur Flandin duly made his proposal and I supported him. At the same time I informed the Committee that His Majesty's Government were prepared to accept any decision to which the Committee of Eighteen might come as regards an oil embargo but that they themselves were in favour of imposing such an embargo by members of the League and were prepared to join in its early application if the other principal supplying and transporting States who are members of the League are prepared to do likewise. Texts of Monsieur Flandin's and my own remarks follow in my telegrams 11 and 12 Saving.⁶

Committee of Eighteen agreed to Monsieur Flandin's proposal and Committee of Thirteen will meet tomorrow morning. The President said that he would convene the Committee of Eighteen very shortly as soon as he received a communication from the Committee of Thirteen.

Repeated to Paris and Rome.

⁵ At 3.30 p.m., March 2.

⁶ Not printed. For the minutes of this meeting of the Committee of Eighteen, including the two speeches, see *L/N.O.J.*, S.S. No. 149, pp. 9-13. There is a brief account in *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 264.

No. 7

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 3, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 16 L.N. Telegraphic [J 1947/757/1]

GENEVA, March 3, 1936, 1.30 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

I had a conversation with Monsieur Potemkine, the Soviet representative on the Committee of Eighteen, this morning.¹ I explained to him the point of view of His Majesty's Government with regard to oil sanction and Monsieur Potemkine in reply made it clear that his government was prepared to take part in any action including an oil sanction as to which His Majesty's Government and the French Government were in agreement. Monsieur Potemkine added that his government was not anxious to take a lead in the matter since it had been exposed to the charge of being influenced by hostility to fascism in Italy. I could however be sure of his full co-operation.

¹ i.e. March 2.

Monsieur Potemkine went on to speak of the situation in Italy. He said that from reports which the Soviet Government had received the situation was far from satisfactory to the Italian Government. The Italian people were depressed because the existing sanctions were having effect and there was no enthusiasm for the war. Nor did Monsieur Potemkine believe that the imposition of fresh sanctions at this stage would rally opinion in support of the war. He was inclined to agree with Monsieur Flandin that Signor Mussolini was probably now anxious for a settlement, for his position was in many respects a very difficult one.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, and Moscow.

No. 8

*Sir E. Drummond*¹ (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received March 3, 6.10 p.m.)
No. 124 Telegraphic [J 1981/84/1]

ROME, March 3, 1936, 3.25 p.m.

Addressed to Geneva telegram No. 7 of 3rd March.

Geneva telegram No. 14.²

From my knowledge of Signor Mussolini's temperament and of his previous declarations I fear he will certainly refuse to being [?begin] negotiations if he feels he is under threat of definite imposition of further sanctions at a fixed date. It is not so much the substance of the matter as the form which is likely to affect him.

If, for instance, it were decided that the Committee of Eighteen could be re-convoked at any moment at the instance of Committee of Thirteen might not formal difficulty be avoided?

Would not by such means the incidence of application of further sanctions remain unaffected, and at the same time Signor Mussolini's objections to negotiations under pressure be met [?]

Repeated to Paris.

¹ H.M. Ambassador at Rome.

² No. 2.

No. 9

*Foreign Office to Sir E. Ovey*¹ (Brussels)
No. 114 [C 1181/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 3, 1936

Sir,

M. de Lantsheere, Private Secretary to M. van Zeeland,² who has been over here for the funeral of the Belgian Ambassadors, came to see

¹ H.M. Ambassador at Brussels.

² Belgian Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Sargent³ on the 24th February, in what he described as his personal capacity and not as a representative of, or under instructions from, M. van Zeeland.

2. M. Flandin has, it appears, been pressing M. van Zeeland to give him his opinion as regards the attitude which ought to be adopted in the face of the German Government's evident intention to precipitate the question of the demilitarised zone in the near future. M. van Zeeland has tried to procrastinate, but M. Flandin, a few days ago, practically insisted on an immediate reply, because he had reason to believe (the Belgians have no such evidence) that Germany intends to reoccupy the zone in the very near future.

3. The Belgian Foreign Office is accordingly considering what sort of opinion they ought to put up. M. Léger⁴ recently recommended, in conversation with the Belgian Ambassador in Paris,⁵ that the Locarno Powers should address a joint formal and 'impressive' warning to the German Government, but the Belgian Foreign Office think that this course would be unwise and ineffective unless the Locarno Powers are really prepared to take military action in the event of a German challenge. As a modified form of this procedure the Belgian Foreign Office had thought that Great Britain, as the guarantor Power with Italy under the Locarno Treaty, might singly address a warning to Berlin, and they were very glad therefore to see that in effect His Majesty's Government had now done this in the answer given to a question in the House of Commons on the 12th February last (a copy is annexed as enclosure 1 to this despatch).⁶

4. M. de Lantsheere felt, however, that this would not satisfy M. Flandin, and the Belgian Foreign Office were therefore turning over in their minds yet another idea.

5. Germany's activities in regard to the demilitarised zone take two forms:

- (a) The actual demilitarisation of the zone is being continually infringed in a variety of ways, which, although singly may be of no great importance, nevertheless are having a serious cumulative effect.
- (b) The German Government lose no opportunity of trying to prove that the other Locarno Powers are violating, if not the letter, at least the spirit of the Locarno treaties, so as to keep up a steady grievance and gradually to create the impression that Locarno is a one-sided arrangement to which the Germans alone make a real contribution, namely by accepting the servitude of the demilitarised zone.

6. Assuming that the German Government were contemplating an unannounced reoccupation of the Rhineland (Mr. Sargent demurred somewhat to this assumption), M. de Lantsheere argued that it was essential for the

³ An Assistant Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office.

⁴ See No. 5, note 4.

⁵ Comte de Kerchove de Denterghem.

⁶ Not printed here. In reply to a question from Mr. Mander on February 12 Mr. Eden said: 'The obligations of His Majesty's Government are specified in the Treaty of Locarno itself. His Majesty's Government stand by those obligations and, as has been previously stated in this House, intend, should the need arise, faithfully to fulfil them' (308 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 918).

Locarno Powers to play a delaying game until their own situation had changed or improved. It would be fatal if the League Council had, under article 4 of the Treaty of Locarno, to 'constater' a violation of the zone, and thus bring into play all the automatic consequences provided by the treaty. Mr. Sargent expressed—on the lines of a minute of Sir William Malkin,⁷ dated the 30th January (a copy is annexed as enclosure 2 to this despatch)⁸—some doubt as to whether the Locarno Treaty really would operate in this ineluctable manner. Anyhow, this did not affect M. de Lantsheere's argument, which was that before the German Government acted, the French Government ought to anticipate matters by proposing to Germany that the allegations on both sides, i.e. (a) illicit remilitarisation alleged by France, and (b) violation of the Treaty of Locarno alleged by Germany, should be referred to the Franco-German Conciliation Commission set up under the Treaty of Locarno itself. Such action would be in strict accord with the agreement between the Locarno Powers concluded at The Hague on the 30th August, 1929 (enclosure 3 to this despatch),⁹ where it was laid down that any difficulty which might arise between France and Belgium and Germany regarding the observance of articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles¹⁰ should be referred to the Conciliation Commission set up by the Locarno Arbitration Convention.

7. Mr. Sargent suggested that whereas this procedure might gain us a certain amount of time, he did not see how it was going to bring about a solution of the real problem, which was caused by the general fear and uncertainty as to what were Germany's ultimate intentions in regard to the demilitarised zone. That was a much bigger problem than could be dealt with by any conciliation commission, and raised in the first place a fundamental question which remained to be answered, namely, what value France, Great Britain and Belgium, in present circumstances, attached to the maintenance of the zone, and what sacrifices they were prepared to make in order to preserve it. It seemed to him that as France was the Power chiefly concerned, it was for her to state first her views on this fundamental question.

8. In discussing briefly the decrease in the value of the demilitarised zone in present conditions, M. de Lantsheere observed that, however that might be, Belgian public opinion believed firmly in the value of the zone and would not allow any Belgian Government to abandon it.

9. On examining further the conciliation idea, Mr. Sargent agreed that, while the conciliation procedure was going on, it would certainly be more difficult for Germany to present us with a *fait accompli* by reoccupying the zone. On the other hand, the time was past when we could hope either to

⁷ Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office.

⁸ Not printed.

⁹ Not printed here: see *B.F.S.P.*, vol. 130, pp. 193–203.

¹⁰ Article 42 ran: 'Germany is forbidden to maintain or construct any fortifications either on the left bank of the Rhine or on the right bank to the west of a line drawn 50 kilometres to the East of the Rhine.' Article 43 ran: 'In the area defined above the maintenance and the assembly of armed forces, either permanently or temporarily, and military manoeuvres of any kind, as well as the upkeep of all permanent works of mobilization, are in the same way forbidden.'

convict or convince Germany of minor infractions of articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. Any such attempt would only lead to a deadlock or to open defiance. As regards Germany's allegations that we were violating the Treaty of Locarno, we could no doubt all of us demonstrate our complete innocence of this charge; but that in itself would not divert Germany from her policy of ridding herself of articles 42 and 43; she would only look for some other pretext for forcing the question forward when it suited her to do so.

10. M. Silvercruys,¹¹ who had accompanied M. de Lantsheere, urged that, even so, the conciliation procedure would be useful, since it could be so manipulated as to lead in an amicable fashion to a discussion of the fundamental problem, and he recommended the procedure on this ground (though it is doubtful whether M. de Lantsheere was prepared to go as far as this). This, Mr. Sargent said, opened up a much wider field and raised quite different questions, which would need careful consideration.

11. M. de Lantsheere ended by expressing the hope that he might have our comments at an early date on the suggestion he had put forward, so as to help the Belgian Foreign Office in framing the views which M. van Zeeland had promised to give to M. Flandin. Mr. Sargent said that he would report what had passed between them to me and would, if necessary, communicate further with M. Silvercruys on the subject.¹²

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

¹¹ Counsellor to the Belgian Embassy in London.

¹² For M. de Lantsheere's account of this conversation see *D.D.B.*, vol. iv, No. 15.

No. 10

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 4, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 19 L.N. Telegraphic [C 1355/4/18]

Confidential

GENEVA, March 4, 1936, 12.15 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

In the course of a conversation this afternoon¹ M. Flandin stated that French Government had been carefully considering action which they would take if Germany were to violate the demilitarized zone. He wished me to know in advance of that eventuality what that decision had been and he would therefore send me this evening for my confidential and personal information a memorandum which fully explained that decision.

M. Flandin said that he also wished to make clear his attitude towards German Chancellor's recent interview given in *Paris Midi*.² He thought it most important not to allow any overture from the German Chancellor

¹ This telegram was drafted on March 3.

² Cf. Volume XV, No. 554.

to be missed however doubtful we might be as to its sincerity. For this reason the German Chancellor would always find him ready to cooperate in any step the purpose of which was to further negotiations with Germany. He thought it important that we should show ourselves ready for such negotiations if only for the purpose of educating our respective public opinions.

I then spoke to M. Flandin about Naval Conference. I said I had not heard the outcome of M. Corbin's³ conversations in London in my absence but that I hoped that the French Government were not going to attempt to link Naval Conference with discussions on air armaments. Quite apart from any other considerations it would not be possible, I felt confident, to induce United States delegation to agree to any such procedure. M. Flandin would clearly appreciate that last thing they would be willing to agree to would be that a conference in which they were engaged should become related in any way to an Air Pact confined to Europe. On the other hand I was as anxious as M. Flandin himself to make progress with Air Pact and we must carefully consider the best moment and method for reopening this subject with German Government. M. Flandin said that he fully appreciated the position and so long as a further attempt was made to make progress with Air Pact I understood that he did not attach any great importance to it being technically linked up with the work of Naval Conference.⁴

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

³ French Ambassador at London.

⁴ Cf. Volume XIII, Nos. 692 and 696.

No. 11

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 4, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 21 L.N. Telegraphic [J 1984/587/1]

GENEVA, March 4, 1936, 12.15 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

In the course of a conversation this morning¹ in regard to terms of resolution to be adopted by Committee of Thirteen this afternoon² Monsieur Flandin said that it was desirable that the French and British Governments should be agreed in advance upon a common attitude in the event of failure of Committee's appeal to the two parties to open negotiations with a view to cessation of hostilities (? imposition) of an oil embargo would create grave situation almost certainly involving the departure of Italy from the League. Monsieur Flandin had therefore certain observations to present to me which for the sake of convenience he had set down in writing in a paper which he would communicate to me in a personal way. A translation of this paper follows in my immediately following telegram.³

¹ i.e. March 3. A fuller record of this conversation is given in No. 20 below.

² See No. 6.

³ Not printed. See Annex to No. 20 below.

Monsieur Flandin said that the departure of Italy from the League might involve her withdrawal from her obligations of Locarno as well as denunciation of Badoglio-Gamelin agreement which had itself been concluded within the framework of Locarno. This together with the possibility of an Italian *rapprochement* with Germany and of German action in demilitarised zone created a grave situation for France and he would wish to be re-assured as to British attitude as to the point mentioned in his paper before taking a decision as regards imposition of an oil embargo.

I said that this was clearly a matter upon which I must consult my colleagues and that I would do so at the earliest possible moment.

No. 12

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 4, 1 p.m.)

No. 23 L.N. Telegraphic [C 1386/4/18]

Very confidential

GENEVA, March 4, 1936, 12.32 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

My telegram No. 19.¹

I this evening² received from Monsieur Flandin for my personal information the following statement of attitude which the French Government propose to take up in the event of a violation of articles 42 and 43 of Treaty of Versailles.

While this document is not to be regarded as an official memorandum Monsieur Flandin gave it to me in writing for our mutual convenience and for the sake of greater precision. In speaking of (c) below Monsieur Flandin indicated that while the French Government were not likely in such circumstances to decree a general mobilisation they would probably take certain preparatory defensive steps on the frontier. The terms of Monsieur Flandin's statement are as follows.

Begins:

(a) French Government will not proceed to any isolated action. It will only act in agreement with co-signatories of Locarno.

(b) In case of flagrant and incontestible [*sic*] violation of articles 42 and 43 the French Government will immediately inform the Council and will immediately place itself in communication with the United Kingdom, Belgian and Italian Governments with a view to concerting common action in the execution of the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations and of Locarno agreements.

(c) Pending the receipt of opinion of above Powers the French Government reserves the right to take any preparatory measures including measures

¹ No. 10.

² i.e. March 3.

of a military character in anticipation of collective action which might be decided upon by the Council of the League and by guarantors of Locarno.³

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

³ The Franco-Belgian discussions preceding the presentation of this document to Mr. Eden are referred to in *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 241, 283, and more fully in *D.D.B.*, *op. cit.*, No. 17.

No. 13

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 4, 12.5 p.m. [sic])
No. 26 Telegraphic [J 2006/84/1]

Immediate

GENEVA, March 4, 1936, 12.32 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

'Committee of Thirteen, acting in virtue of mandate given to it by the Council in its resolution of December 19th,² addresses to both belligerents an urgent appeal for immediate opening of negotiations within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant with a view to the prompt cessation of hostilities and definite restoration of peace. The Committee of Thirteen will meet on March 10th to take cognisance of replies of the two governments'.

Repeated to Paris and Rome and to Addis Ababa by Foreign Office telegram No. 79.

¹ This telegram appears to have been despatched in advance of No. 14 below.

² Cf. Volume XV, No. 405.

No. 14

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 4, 1 p.m.)
No. 25 L.N. Telegraphic [J 2005/84/1]

Immediate

GENEVA, March 4, 1936, 12.35 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

My immediately following telegram¹ contains text of message sent by Committee of Thirteen this evening² to the two belligerents appealing to them to open negotiations for a prompt cessation of hostilities and definite establishment of peace.

Text of this message was agreed upon between M. Flandin and myself after a long meeting this morning² (record of which comes by bag to-morrow) and a further meeting this afternoon.³

¹ No. 13 above.

² i.e. March 3: cf. No. 11 and No. 20 below.

³ It appears that the text of M. Flandin's proposed resolution was telephoned to London,

I should myself have preferred some reference in the message to report of Committee of Five⁴ as a possible basis of negotiation and fixing of an earlier date than March 10th for the next meeting of the Committee of Thirteen. It appears however that any reference to Committee of Five's report might be embarrassing to some of the members of the Committee including the Soviet representatives who are not enamoured of its terms. And there is some point in the argument that if a short time limit is fixed it may be physically impossible to get a reply from the Emperor in time.

On the other hand I was able to secure point that Committee of Eighteen should in the meantime do some further work on the question of oil embargo. Committee of Eighteen will meet again tomorrow morning and will instruct Committee of Experts on Petroleum to draw up a plan for application of oil embargo which it is hoped will be ready for the use of the Committee of Eighteen in the event of a decision being taken next week to impose embargo. This matter would in any event require expert study from a technical point of view and the fact that we are employing this interval in order to carry it out means that postponement of meeting of Committee of Thirteen until March 10th will not in practice involve any appreciable loss of time.

Repeated to Paris and Rome and to Addis Ababa by Foreign Office No. 78.

and that two amendments were later telephoned to Geneva by Lord Stanhope, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, apparently in time for the second conversation in the afternoon. The first appears to have provided for the negotiation of a final settlement as well as an armistice. The second seems to have concerned the date for replies to the appeal.

⁴ See Volume XIV, No. 641, note 4.

No. 15

*Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received March 4, 5.50 p.m.)
No. 44 Telegraphic [C 1396/4/18]*

BERLIN, March 4, 1936, 5.42 p.m.

I hear on good authority the latest move at Geneva has aroused great interest here. German Government feel that if Signor Mussolini does not accept peace proposals he may not only leave the League but denounce Locarno. In that case Germany would have to decide quickly what action she would take. The hotheads led by General Goering¹ would wish to re-occupy the demilitarized zone on the ground that by Italy's defection Locarno lapsed.²

Repeated to Geneva for Secretary of State.

¹ President of the Reichstag and Reich Air Minister.

² Anglo-French differences over sanctions, and the absence of any Anglo-French agreement about joint action in the event of a German breach of the Locarno treaty, were made clear by Mr. Eden in a conversation at Geneva with Mr. Vernon Bartlett, Diplomatic

correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, who reported them to the German Consul at Geneva, Herr W. Krauel. He in turn reported them to the German Foreign Office late on March 5 (*D.G.F.P.*, Series C, vol. v, Nos. 1 and 2). Herr Hitler had however already decided to announce the 'restoration of German sovereignty in the demilitarized zone' on March 7 (*ibid.*, No. 3).

No. 16

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 5)

No. 17 Saving: Telegraphic [J 2043/757/1]

Immediate

GENEVA, March 4, 1936

Addressed to Addis Ababa No. 1.

Following from Secretary of State.

You¹ will be aware from the telegrams which have been repeated to you from here of the course which events have followed since our arrival. It may be useful to you if I now review the situation as I see it.

It has always been clearly understood that the functions of the League in dealing with this dispute must be two-fold. While the Members of the League continue to apply such measures of economic and financial pressure as they are able to impose by common agreement, the organs of the League must neglect no opportunity of trying to find a settlement of the dispute by agreement between the parties. The body which attends to the organisation of sanctions is the Committee of Eighteen, which is a Sub-Committee of the larger Co-ordination Committee. The body which has been charged by the Council with the special duty of following the dispute from the point of view of possible conciliation is the Committee of Thirteen, composed of members of the Council sitting without the parties.

The principal object of the present meeting of the Committee of Eighteen was to take a decision upon the recent report of the Experts Committee on the oil embargo.² The French Government have some reason to fear that the imposition of an oil embargo will have serious political repercussions in Europe, and it is for this reason that they have strongly urged that, before any decision is taken as to the imposition of that embargo, a further and perhaps final appeal shall be made to bring the parties to negotiate for a cessation of hostilities. They have the impression that the recent Italian successes in the field, together with the growing financial difficulties of a costly campaign, may make the present moment a more favourable one for an attempt at conciliation than has been the case in the past. This reason has influenced the Committee of Thirteen to address an appeal to the two parties in the terms given in my telegram to the Foreign Office No. 26.³ It is the intention that if negotiations are opened, they will take place at Geneva

¹ Sir S. Barton, H.M. Minister at Addis Ababa.

² See Volume XV, No. 514, and *L.N.O.J.*, S.S. No. 148, Annex, pp. 64-85.

³ No. 13.

under the auspices of the League. The Committee of Thirteen will in any event meet again on March 10th, and unless the replies of the two parties are such as to permit of an early opening of negotiations the Committee of Eighteen will meet again immediately to take a decision upon the oil embargo.

It cannot yet be foreseen what will be the attitude of the Members of the Committee to the imposition of that embargo, though the indications are that the producing and transporting States will perhaps be willing to impose it. As I stated in the Committee of Eighteen on March 2nd, His Majesty's Government for their part are in favour of the imposition of an oil embargo by the Members of the League (see my telegram to the Foreign Office No. 15).⁴ The attitude of the French Government is uncertain, but it is not impossible that if agreement is reached on other cognate matters on which conversations have been engaged with His Majesty's Government, they will also agree to the imposition of the embargo. It cannot be expected that the embargo will have any immediate effect: the most that can be hoped in present conditions is that it will increase the Italian difficulties. If it is applied, it will be applied less by reason of its probable effectiveness, than as a means of demonstrating the determination of Members of the League to persist in the policy upon which they have embarked.

It was with the same intention that it has been decided that the petroleum Experts shall spend the time between now and the next meeting of the Committee of Thirteen on the preparation of a plan for the application of the oil embargo which it is hoped will be ready for the use of the Committee of Eighteen in the event of a decision being taken next week to impose the embargo.⁵ There will thus be no unnecessary waste of time.

It is difficult from here to estimate the reaction of the two belligerents to this message. There may be signs of a possible change of attitude on the Italian side, and it is conceivable that Signor Mussolini's response may be less categorically negative than in the past. My own feeling is that if the two parties could be brought together at Geneva for the first time since the outbreak of war, a great deal would have been gained, but this is naturally a matter which the two parties must decide for themselves, and it would be both improper and imprudent for us to volunteer any advice. At the same time the Emperor has usually in the past been well advised in the communications he has made to the League, and he has lost nothing in the public estimation by placing himself in the hands of the League, however strongly he may feel that the League has not been able to save him from invasion.

The foregoing has been sent to you for your guidance in the event of any approach that may be made to you by the Emperor. You should not volunteer any advice though you may, if you see fit, and if he makes an approach, speak to the Emperor in the sense of the immediately preceding paragraph.

Repeated to Rome No. 12, and Paris No. 14 (Saving) by bag.

⁴ No. 6.

⁵ Cf. No. 14.

No. 17

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received March 5)

No. 43 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1395/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, March 4, 1936

Lunching with his cronies after opening the Motor Show Herr Hitler, I learn, talked exuberantly about Germany's growing immunity from sanctions. Herr Darré,¹ who was present, remarked that food supplies in time of war would always be a weak point. To this Herr Hitler replied that Germany should never engage in war without a ten years' supply of whale oil and other essential oils. (I believe that whale oil is the only edible oil which keeps indefinitely).²

¹ German Minister of Agriculture.

² Commenting on this telegram in a minute of March 9, Mr. F. T. A. Ashton-Gwatkin, Counsellor in the Foreign Office and head of the Economic Relations Section of the League of Nations Department, gave details of German resources and deficiencies and concluded: 'It would seem, therefore, that over a long period Germany is exposed to considerable economic pressure; but as regards immediate effect, or for a short period, she is almost sanctions proof.'

On the other hand, Herr Hitler and his friends do not seem to have discussed the situation that would be created if a considerable number of countries refused to take imports from Germany. This sanction has proved to be of a considerable degree of effectiveness in the case of Italy; and in the case of Germany, which is more highly industrialised, it would probably be still more effective in its disorganising the country's economy and in creating areas of unemployment and discontent.'

Studies of German vulnerability to blockade in time of war were being made at this time by the Industrial Intelligence Centre under the direction of Major Desmond Morton, and were already well advanced: cf. W. N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade* (H.M.S.O., 1952), vol. i, pp. 24-36. Cf. also Volume XII, No. 723, and No. 19 below.

No. 18

Minute by Mr. O. St. C. O'Malley¹ on the Franco-Italian military conversations

[J 1977/587/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 4, 1936

General Gamelin went to Rome at the end of June 1935. The French Government began by denying that he had arranged anything of importance with General Badoglio, but by the end of August General Gamelin was freely admitting to our Military Attaché the military advantages derived from the closer relation with Italy formed during the first six months of the year. In spite of enquiries made in every direction, we have never discovered precisely what the arrangements were,² but we know that they enabled the French and Italian General Staffs to contemplate, in certain circumstances,

¹ Head of the Southern Department of the Foreign Office.

² See Volume XIV, No. 326, note 4.

the denuding to a great extent of the Italo-French frontier. The French can transfer their troops to the German frontier, and the Italians did transfer theirs to Abyssinia. The position on the Italo-French frontier in Africa was similarly eased. As part of this arrangement France is believed to have given some undertaking to have troops available to resist a German incursion into Austria, so as to relieve Italy of the necessity of keeping those army corps on the Brenner which had been sent there after the Dollfuss murder.³ Another rather fantastic arrangement seems to have been agreed upon, under which if Italy and Yugoslavia were both to send troops into Austria against Germany, the French divisions would be sandwiched between the two armies in order to prevent them flying at each other's throats.

Although the French and Italian Governments have never admitted, nay—have denied, the existence of an intergovernmental agreement on the above lines, much less registered it with the League of Nations, these 'conversations between General Staffs' must for practical purposes be considered as the equivalent of a military treaty and they have undoubtedly been a prime factor in tying first Monsieur Laval and later Monsieur Flandin to the chariot-wheels of Italy at Geneva.⁴

O. O'MALLEY

³ See Volume VI, Nos. 525 and 533.

⁴ Cf. Volume XIV, Nos. 472 and 487.

No. 19

Minute by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin

[C 1651/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 4, 1936*

The paper 'Present Economic and Financial Situation in Germany' (G(36)2)¹ deals with facts and does not submit recommendations or suggestions.

It points, however, to Germany's dire *need for export markets*, which is at the back of most of her economic and some of her political distress.

The suggestions which have been considered in the course of the enquiry are as follows:

- (1) Restitution of a colony or colonies.
Consideration indefinitely deferred.
- (2) Raw materials enquiry.
Approved in principle, but postponed for the present.
- (3) Devaluation of the Mark.

This is for Germany to decide; it is probably an inevitable step. It might be assisted by our own policy as regards (a) stabilisation

¹ Not printed (C 1348/4/18). This paper was prepared by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin in consultation with the Treasury and the Board of Trade, for the Cabinet Committee on Germany.

- (b) no increase of import duties. Neither of these points have [*sic*] been considered so far.
- (4) Guaranteed loan to Germany.
No paper submitted, but the Chancellor² will say that this is impracticable in present circumstances, and that it is very doubtful whether Germany wants a foreign loan.
- (5) Special trading advantages for Germany in the Danube Basin. Board of Trade is opposed to any formal derogation of our most-favoured-nation rights, though they admit that such rights are in practice being circumvented.
- (6) Any extension of the present commercial agreements with Germany by (a) the United Kingdom and colonial empire: Board of Trade and Colonial Office see no possibility, (b) Dominions and India: Dominions and India Office have no practical suggestions to make. The main difficulty in every case is that any concession to Germany would be at the expense of some British interest.
- (7) Co-operation with Germany in trade and credit policy towards the Soviet Union. Export Credits Guarantee Department, from their past experience, see little prospect for co-operation in the future.

On the economic side, therefore, the result of our enquiry is negative. Perhaps, there is something wrong in this way of approach. Individual suggestions, taken individually, are easy to eliminate through the disadvantages inherent in each. Another and perhaps more fruitful way is that suggested by the Secretary of State in his covering note to C.P. 42(36)³ viz: that we should approach Germany with proposals to collaborate so far as possible in a new period of European tranquillity and economic reconstruction. It may then be found that, if there is a real chance of settlement, the disadvantages of sacrifice may be outweighed by the advantages of a concrete contribution to peace.

F. ASHTON-GWATKIN

² Mr. N. Chamberlain.

³ Volume XV, No. 509.

No. 20

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 5)

No. 18 [J 2045/84/1]

GENEVA, March 4, 1936

The United Kingdom delegate to the League of Nations presents his compliments, and has the honour to transmit the record of an Anglo-French conversation on the 3rd March respecting the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.¹

Copies have been sent to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Rome.

¹ Cf. No. 6.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 20

*Record of Anglo-French conversation held at the Hôtel Beau Rivage, Geneva, on
March 3, 1936, at Noon*

PRESENT: *Great Britain*: Mr. Eden, Mr. Strang.

France: M. P. E. Flandin, M. Paul-Boncour, M. René Massigli.

M. FLANDIN said that he would like to discuss the terms of the appeal which the Committee of Thirteen would address to Italy and Abyssinia after its meeting that afternoon.² In his view it ought to be drafted in very wide terms and ought not to limit the opening of negotiations other than by reference to the framework of the League and the spirit of the Covenant. He thought that the message might be drafted somewhat as follows:

The Committee of Thirteen

Acting in accordance with the mandate given to it by the Council in its Resolution of December 19th

Addresses an urgent appeal to the two belligerents for the immediate opening of negotiations within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant with a view to the cessation of hostilities. Requests them to communicate their acceptance of the foregoing by March . . .

MR. EDEN said that there was no reference to the Report of the Committee of Five.³

M. FLANDIN said that Mr. Eden's remarks on the previous day in the Committee of Eighteen in regard to the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the oil embargo had lessened the chances of a successful issue to the appeal. If the appeal were now to contain elements which would be certain to give Italy a pretext for refusing, it would be said that the appeal was not serious but was a mere gesture. Apart from this he had reason to believe that a reference to the Report of the Committee of Five would be embarrassing to the Soviet Delegation.

MR. EDEN asked whether M. Flandin had any indication from Rome as to the attitude of the Italian Government to the proposed appeal.

M. FLANDIN said that the French Ambassador had asked for an interview with Signor Mussolini but had not yet been received.

MR. EDEN asked what was proposed as a time limit for the acceptance of the two Parties.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR said that he attached importance to the present appeal, which would be a final effort of conciliation. It would be a mistake to give Italy a chance of pleading lack of time as a pretext for refusal.

MR. EDEN said that the objection to the delay was that there was a war going on and that further postponement would give the appearance of reluctance to face the facts of the situation. What period had M. Flandin in mind?

M. FLANDIN thought that a week would be the right period.

² See No. 13.

³ Cf. No. 14.

MR. EDEN recalled that a few weeks ago the Committee of Thirteen had decided that there was no further step it could take along the path of conciliation. Since then nothing new had happened except that the Abyssinians appeared to have suffered heavy defeats. Was there any real hope that the appeal would now be successful[?]

M. PAUL-BONCOUR thought that it was necessary to make the appeal before going on to any further sanction.

M. FLANDIN said that one of the objects of the appeal was to get negotiations started at Geneva. He was convinced that Geneva was the proper place, and he had told the French Ambassador in Rome that the French and British Governments could not agree to engage in any further Three Power conversations.

MR. EDEN said that he would have preferred a reference to the Committee of Five, the fixing of a shorter time limit, and a more definite reference to Geneva as the seat of the negotiations.

M. FLANDIN then said that he had a more serious question to raise. It was desirable that the French and British Governments should be agreed in advance upon a common attitude in the event of the failure of the Committee's appeal. The imposition of an oil embargo would create a grave situation, almost certainly involving the departure of Italy from the League. M. Flandin had therefore certain observations to present to Mr. Eden which, for the sake of convenience, he had set down in writing in a paper which he would communicate to Mr. Eden in a personal way. (The text of this statement is annexed,⁴ together with a translation.⁵)

M. Flandin said that the departure of Italy from the League might involve her withdrawal from the obligations of Locarno, as well as the denunciation of the Badoglio-Gamelin agreement, which had itself been concluded within the framework of Locarno. This, together with the possibility of an Italian *rapprochement* with Germany, and of German action in the demilitarized zone, created a grave situation for France, and he would wish to be reassured as to the British attitude as to the points mentioned in his paper before taking a decision as regards the imposition of an oil embargo.

MR. EDEN said that this was clearly a matter upon which he must consult his colleagues and promised to do so at the earliest possible moment. (M. Flandin's remarks on this point were also reported in Geneva Telegrams Nos. 21⁶ and 22⁷ of March 3rd).

M. FLANDIN then said that he had a piece of information for Mr. Eden. He had just seen M. Motta,⁸ who had spoken in such a way as to allow it to be understood that if Italy withdrew from the League, Switzerland might also do the same.

MR. EDEN said that he was just as anxious as was M. Flandin that Italy

⁴ Not printed. The French text is printed in *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 283.

⁵ See Annex to this document.

⁶ No. 11.

⁷ Not printed.

⁸ Head of the Political Department (Foreign Affairs) and Vice President of the Swiss Federal Council.

should not leave Geneva, but he was acutely conscious that if the League could not function effectively on the present occasion, it would be difficult to place any great reliance upon the League in the future.

MR. EDEN promised to make an immediate study of M. Flandin's draft Resolution.

(The meeting then adjourned.)

ANNEX TO No. 20

Text of Statement made by M. Flandin to Mr. Eden

Translation

March 3, 1936

1. The declaration regarding the oil embargo which the British delegate thought fit to add to the agreement which he gave to the proposal regarding the summoning of the Committee of Thirteen has notably diminished the chances of success of the appeal which the Committee may make to Italy. Nevertheless the effort must be made, but it must from now on be foreseen that the debate on oil will be resumed after a short interval.

2. In the opinion of the French Government, the debate on oil should be a technical debate with a view to deciding on the effectiveness of the measure proposed, in accordance with the decisions already taken by the Committee of Thirteen. In any case it will be necessary to define exactly the attitude of all Members of the League who are producers of oil.

3. But there is an immediate political problem in regard to which an Anglo-French exchange of views is necessary.

4. The Italian Government has declared that, if an oil embargo is decided upon, Italy will withdraw from the League of Nations. She will probably seek a *rapprochement* with Germany. The attitude of this Power will not be decided in advance. But there is a grave risk; and Germany may be tempted to profit by the situation in the demilitarised zone.

5. In this event it is to be feared that Italy will disinterest herself in Locarno. The French Government counts on the British Government being ready to hold that the Treaty of Locarno commits them vis-à-vis France even in the absence of the other guarantor. It counts on England being ready to support France, even alone, in the maintenance of the demilitarised zone.

But the British Government will understand that before taking a decision in regard to a proposal (the oil embargo) which may have repercussions in such a near future and repercussions which for France would be so immediate and so grave, the French Government desires to receive confirmation that the British Government is in agreement on these various points.

No. 21

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received March 5)

No. 19 [J 2046/84/1]

GENEVA, March 4, 1936

The United Kingdom Delegate to the League of Nations presents his compliments, and has the honour to transmit copies of the under-mentioned paper of which copies have been sent to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Rome.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 21

Record of the Meeting of the Committee of Thirteen held at Geneva on March 3 at 3.30 p.m.

THE SPANISH REPRESENTATIVE (M. Oliván) as Chairman, began by reminding the Committee that it had been requested to meet by the Committee of Eighteen on the initiative of M. Flandin.

MONSIEUR FLANDIN then made a brief statement. He said that it was the earnest desire of the French Government to strengthen the League of Nations in every possible way. They must, however, not lose sight of realities nor of the real object in view, which was to put an early end to hostilities. He thought that the time had now come for a new effort to be made in this direction with the dual object of re-establishing peace and of improving the political and economic situation in the world. The recent Italian military successes had improved Italian prestige and he thought Signor Mussolini might now be prepared to consider peace negotiations within the framework of the League. The first step, however, was to get the principle of negotiations accepted, and he therefore wished to propose the resolution which is annexed.¹ He suggested the 10th March as the date for the next meeting of the Committee.

THE UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE (Mr. Eden) said that he was prepared to concur in the resolution. He would also agree to any date the Committee chose, either the 9th or 10th of March.

THE POLISH AND SOVIET REPRESENTATIVES both supported the resolution.

THE TURKISH REPRESENTATIVE, in expressing his concurrence, asked whether, if negotiations were opened, it was contemplated that hostilities might nevertheless continue.

MONSIEUR FLANDIN replied that there was no doubt that the opening of negotiations implied the very early cessation of hostilities. He had, however, deliberately drafted the text of the resolution as widely as possible.

THE CHAIRMAN then put to the Committee the insertion in the resolution of the date of 10th March for the next meeting of the Committee of Thirteen. This date was agreed to.

MR. EDEN said he agreed with the text, and earnestly hoped that this

¹ Not printed here: see No. 13.

attempt to put an end to hostilities would prove successful. He wished, however, to raise a point regarding the procedure which would be followed by the Committee of Eighteen pending the re-assembly of the Committee of Thirteen. He recognised that the Committee of Thirteen could not give orders to the Committee of Eighteen, but as most of the members of the Committee of Thirteen were also members of the Committee of Eighteen, he would welcome the views of his colleagues on this point.

THE PORTUGUESE REPRESENTATIVE,² AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF EIGHTEEN, said that he had intended to propose to the Committee of Eighteen that its Expert Sub-Committee should examine the points raised by M. Flandin at the previous meeting regarding the effectiveness of sanctions. Meanwhile the Oil Experts would meet again to examine and propose solutions for the technical problems involved by the application of an oil embargo. The Committee of Eighteen would meet again after March 10th.

MR. EDEN said he agreed to this procedure. The Experts would, in any case, have had to do this work, so no delay was involved.

MONSIEUR FLANDIN emphasized that the work of the Oil Experts would be strictly technical.³

² M. de Vasconcellos.

³ The Committee of Eighteen met again at 11 a.m. on March 4 and agreed that the proposals made by M. Flandin at the previous meeting (cf. No. 6) should be referred to the Committee of Experts instructed to follow the application of sanctions. See *L/N.O.J.*, S.S. No. 149, p. 14.

No. 22

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden¹ (Received March 6)

No. 101 Telegraphic [C 1425/4/18]

PARIS, March 5, 1936

My despatch No. 280.²

On March 4th the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Senate after hearing MM. Sarraut³ and Laval accepted the Bill for the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact by 19 votes to 4 with 10 abstentions. The debate in the Senate will probably begin on March 12th.

¹ Mr. Eden returned to London on the afternoon of March 5.

² In this despatch of February 28 Sir G. Clerk summarized the course of the debate in the French Chamber on the afternoon of February 27 leading to the ratification of the Franco-Soviet pact by 353 votes to 164 with 47 abstentions; cf. Volume XV, No. 550.

³ French Minister President.

No. 23

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 6, 2.20 p.m.)

No. 48 Telegraphic [C 1449/4/18]

Very Confidential

BERLIN, March 6, 1936, 2.19 p.m.

My telegram No. 46.¹

French Ambassador has not yet received any proposals from the Chancellor. His impression is that when they do come they will not amount to much. He feels that the Chancellor is waiting on events in Abyssinia and Geneva.

¹ This telegram of March 4 to the Foreign Office said that M. François-Poncet, French Ambassador at Berlin, had just given him an account of his interview with Herr Hitler of March 2 (cf. Volume XV, No. 554, note 1) which was almost identical with an account of the interview given to Mr. Eden by M. Flandin on the evening of March 3. Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 281, 288, and 289.

No. 24

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 6, 5 p.m.)

No. 49 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1451/4/18]

Immediate

BERLIN, March 6, 1936

French Ambassador, myself and Belgian Chargé d'Affaires¹ have been summoned to see Minister for Foreign Affairs² tomorrow morning in quick succession.

There are rumours current here that some action is on the point of being taken by the German Government in regard to Locarno.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, and Brussels.

¹ M. Graeffe.

² Baron von Neurath.

No. 25

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received March 6, 6 p.m.)

No. 87 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 2091/84/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, March 6, 1936

Your telegram No. 1 from Geneva.¹

On 5th March Director General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought me texts of telegrams received here on 4th March from Ethiopian Legation in Paris and from Committee of Thirteen² together with draft of a reply to Geneva based on instructions received from Emperor.

¹ No. 16.

² See Nos. 13 and 14.

up classes or taking other military measures until the League has pronounced on the question of treaty violation. French Government intend to propose in any case that action should be taken in the sense of passage in resolution adopted by the Council last year³ in connexion with Germany's denunciation of Part V of the Versailles Treaty,⁴ declaring that economic and financial sanctions should be taken against any State which unilaterally repudiates its international obligations.

³ See Volume XII, No. 722, note 27, and No. 732.

⁴ See *ibid.*, No. 570.

No. 42

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 301 [C 1480/4/18]

Confidential

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 7, 1936*

Sir,

The German Ambassador asked to see me this morning when he said that he had two communications to make. First, he wished to speak to me about the Naval Conference. The German Government had carefully considered the formula, which we had submitted to them in connexion with the age of battleships, and they were prepared to agree to it. The German Government were prepared to sign the Naval Agreement even without Italy on condition, however, that a similar agreement should be signed with the Soviet Government before the entry into force of the agreement between Great Britain and Germany, that is to say before the 1st January, 1937. The only outstanding point at issue, as to which the Ambassador was confident there would be no difficulty, was the form which the Naval Agreement between our two countries was to take. The German Government would wish this to be in the form of an exchange of notes. The Ambassador added that as I would understand from this declaration there was no longer any substantial difficulty in the way of the further Anglo-German Naval Agreement.

2. The Ambassador then went on to say that he had a communication of very great importance to make to me. He was afraid that the first part of it would not be to my taste, but the later portions contained an offer of greater importance than had been made at any time in recent history.¹

3. The Ambassador then read to me a memorandum,² of which a translation is attached.

4. I observed that the Ambassador would not expect me to make any detailed observation on a document of this importance until I had had an opportunity to give it careful study and to consult with my colleagues on the situation which it created. At the same time there was one observation which I must make at once. I deeply regretted the information which he had

¹ The first two paragraphs of this despatch have already been printed as No. 702 of Volume XIII.

² See Enclosure. An English translation of the final text of the memorandum is printed in *D.G.F.P., op. cit.*, pp. 15-19, in *Cmd. 5118 Germany No. 1* (1936), and elsewhere.

given me about the action which the German Government was taking in respect of the demilitarised zone. The Ambassador would appreciate that this amounted to the unilateral repudiation of a treaty freely negotiated and freely signed. I had a clear recollection of the statement which the Chancellor had made to me at our first meeting in Berlin on the subject of Locarno, when he had clearly distinguished that treaty and the Treaty of Versailles, and had emphasised that Germany had freely signed the former. The Ambassador said that he fully appreciated this, but that the German Government considered that the Franco-Soviet Pact had already violated the Locarno Treaty. I replied that I was aware of the views of the German Government on the effect of the Franco-Soviet Pact on the Locarno Treaty. That view was not, however, shared by the other signatories of the treaty, and if the German Government, despite the views of the other signatories, still maintained their own conclusion, then there was the proper arbitration available for their use. I feared that the effect of this unilateral repudiation of a treaty upon His Majesty's Government and upon British public opinion must inevitably be deplorable.

5. As to the later parts of the Ambassador's observations, I would have carefully to consider these, but clearly the declaration in respect of Germany's attitude towards the League was most important. The Ambassador stated that this part of the memorandum was due to the desire of the Chancellor to meet the views frequently expressed by myself and by the Prime Minister in speeches. We had emphasised that our policy was based upon the League and upon collective security. Germany was willing to share in such a policy. He must make it clear that there were no conditions attached to Germany's return to the League. She wished to return now. While the German Government did hope that at some later date the Covenant would be divorced from the Treaty of Versailles and Germany be given some measure of satisfaction in respect of colonies, these were not conditions, but matters for negotiation subsequent to Germany's return to the League. As regards the Rhineland Zone, a few small German detachments were to-day moving into that zone. The Ambassador added that I would observe that the memorandum contained an expression of a desire to negotiate an air pact, which was the very subject I had raised with the Ambassador yesterday.

6. In conclusion, I repeated that it was not possible for me to express opinions upon individual items in the memorandum, but that I would probably ask the Ambassador to come and see me again in the near future.

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

ENCLOSURE IN No. 42

Translation of German Memorandum of March 7, 1936

Immediately after being informed of the Pact between France and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, concluded on the 2nd May, 1935,

the German Government drew the attention of the other signatory Powers of the Locarno Rhine Pact to the fact that the obligations, which France has undertaken in the new Pact, are not compatible with her obligations arising out of the Rhine Pact. The German Government then explained their point of view in full detail and in both its legal and political aspects—in its legal aspect in the German Memorandum of the 25th May, 1935, in its political aspect in the many diplomatic conversations which followed on that Memorandum. It is also known to the Governments concerned that neither their written replies to the German Memorandum, nor the arguments brought forward by them through the diplomatic channel or in public declarations, were able to invalidate the German Government's point of view.³

In fact, all the diplomatic and public discussions which have taken place since May 1935 regarding these questions, have only been able to confirm on all points the view expressed by the German Government at the outset.

1. It is an undisputed fact that the Franco-Soviet Pact is exclusively directed against Germany.

2. It is an undisputed fact that in the Pact France undertakes, in the event of a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union, obligations which go far beyond her duty as laid down in the Covenant of the League of Nations, and which compel her to take military action against Germany, even when she cannot appeal either to a recommendation or to an actual decision of the Council of the League.

3. It is an undisputed fact that France, in such a case, claims for herself the right to decide on her own judgment who is the aggressor.

4. It is thereby established that France has undertaken towards the Soviet Union obligations which practically amount to undertaking in a given case to act as if neither the Covenant of the League of Nations, nor the Rhine Pact, which refers to the Covenant, were valid.

This result of the Franco-Soviet Pact is not removed by the fact that France, in the Pact, makes the reservation that she does not wish to be bound to take military action against Germany if by such action she would expose herself to a sanction on the part of the guarantor Powers, Italy and Great Britain. As regards this reservation, the decisive fact remains that the Rhine Pact is not based only on the obligations of Great Britain and Italy as guarantor Powers, but primarily on the obligations established in the relations between France and Germany. Therefore it matters only whether France, in undertaking these treaty obligations, has kept herself within the limits imposed on her so far as Germany is concerned by the Rhine Pact.

This, however, the German Government must deny.

The Rhine Pact was intended to achieve the object of securing peace in Western Europe by providing that Germany on the one hand and France and Belgium on the other hand, in their relation to one another, should renounce for all future time the use of military force. If at the time of the

³ For these discussions concerning German reactions to the Franco-Soviet Pact, see Volume XIII, Chapter III, *passim*.

conclusion of the pact certain exceptions to this renunciation of war going beyond the right of self-defence were admitted, the political reason for this, as is generally known, lay solely in the fact that France had already undertaken certain obligations towards Poland and Czechoslovakia, which she did not wish to sacrifice to the conception of absolute security in the West. Germany, with her own clear conscience in regard to the matter, at the time accepted these limitations on the renunciation of war. She did not raise objections to the treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia, laid by France on the table at Locarno, solely on the obvious condition that these treaties were in conformity with the construction of the Rhine Pact, and contained no sort of provisions regarding the application of article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, such as those contained in the new Franco-Soviet agreements. The contents of these special agreements, as then notified to the German Government, fulfilled this condition. The exceptions admitted in the Rhine Pact were not, it is true, specifically confined to Poland and Czechoslovakia, but were formulated as an abstract principle. Nevertheless, the intention of all the negotiations relating to these questions was merely to find a compromise between the renunciation of war by Germany and France, and the wish of France to maintain the obligations which she had already undertaken towards her allies. If, therefore, France now utilises abstract provisions of the Rhine Pact, which permit the possibility of war, in order to conclude a fresh alliance against Germany with a Power highly armed in a military sense; if she thus further, and in so decisive a manner, restricts the scope of the renunciation of war agreed upon with Germany; and if in this connexion, as shown above, she does not even observe the fixed formal legal limits, she has created an entirely new situation, and has destroyed the political system of the Rhine Pact, not only in theory but also in fact.

The latest debates and decisions of the French Parliament have shown that France, in spite of the German representations, is determined to put the pact with the Soviet Union definitively into force. A diplomatic conversation has even revealed that France already regards herself as bound by her signature of this pact on the 2nd May, 1935. In the face of such a development of European politics, the German Government, if they do not wish to neglect or to abandon the interests of the German people which they have the duty of safeguarding, cannot remain inactive.

The German Government have continually emphasised during the negotiations of the last years their readiness to observe and fulfil all the obligations arising from the Rhine Pact as long as the other contracting parties were ready on their side to maintain the pact. This obvious and essential condition can no longer be regarded as being fulfilled by France. France has replied to the repeated friendly offers and peaceful assurances made by Germany by infringing the Rhine Pact through a military alliance with the Soviet Union exclusively directed against Germany. In this manner however, the Locarno Rhine Pact has lost its inner meaning and ceased in practice to exist. Consequently, Germany regards herself for her part as no longer bound by this dissolved treaty. The German Government are

now constrained to face the new situation created by this alliance, a situation which is rendered more acute by the fact that the Franco-Soviet Treaty has been supplemented by a Treaty of Alliance between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union exactly parallel in form. In accordance with the fundamental right of a nation to secure its frontiers and ensure its possibilities of defence, the German Government have to-day restored the full and unrestricted sovereignty of Germany in the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland.

In order, however, to avoid any misinterpretation of their intentions and to establish beyond doubt the purely defensive character of these measures, as well as to express their unchangeable longing for a real pacification of Europe between States which are equals in rights and equally respected, the German Government declare themselves ready to conclude new agreements for the creation of a system of peaceful security for Europe on the basis of the following proposals:

- (1) The German Government declare themselves ready to enter at once into negotiations with France and Belgium with regard to the creation of a zone demilitarised on both sides, and to give their agreement in advance to any suggestion regarding the depth and nature thereof on the basis of full parity.
- (2) The German Government propose, for the purpose of ensuring the sanctity and inviolability of the boundaries in the West, the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between Germany, France and Belgium, the duration of which they are ready to fix at twenty-five years.
- (3) The German Government desire to invite Great Britain and Italy to sign this treaty as guarantor Powers.
- (4) The German Government agree, in case the Netherlands Government should so desire and the other Contracting Parties consider it appropriate, to bring the Netherlands into this treaty system.
- (5) The German Government are prepared, in order to strengthen further these security agreements between the Western Powers, to conclude an air pact calculated to prevent in an automatic and effective manner the danger of sudden air attacks.
- (6) The Government repeat their offer to conclude with the States bordering Germany in the East non-aggressive pacts similar to that with Poland. As the Lithuanian Government have in the last few months corrected their attitude towards the Memel Territory to a certain extent, the German Government withdraw the exception which they once made regarding Lithuania and declare their readiness, on condition that the guaranteed autonomy of the Memel Territory is effectively developed, to sign a non-aggression pact of this nature with Lithuania also.
- (7) Now that Germany's equality of rights and the restoration of her full sovereignty over the entire territory of the German Reich have finally been attained, the German Government consider the chief reason for their withdrawal from the League of Nations to be

removed. They are therefore willing to re-enter the League of Nations. In this connexion they express the expectation that in the course of a reasonable period the question of colonial equality of rights and that of the separation of the League Covenant from its Versailles setting may be clarified through friendly negotiations.

No. 43

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 10)

No. 286 [C 1558/4/18]

BERLIN, March 7, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you, herewith, some notes made by my Financial Adviser¹ on the Foreign Office memorandum respecting German expansion, dated 31st January, 1936 (C 807/4/18).² Much as I welcome proposals for dealing with the German problem, I fear I cannot endorse the suggestions made in this memorandum, for the main premise on which it is based is, in my opinion, faulty.

2. If I read the memorandum correctly it begins by asking us to choose between two theories to account for German unrest; (1) that it is due to the rapacity of a domineering people, or (2) that it is merely a symptom of economic distress. I fear that the choice is not between any two such simple alternatives. An analysis of the underlying causes of German unrest would be outside the scope of this despatch, but I believe I am safe in asserting that Hitlerism, like Bolshevism or Fascism, is a doctrine arising out of Germany's immediate past, and out of recent European developments. The pan-Germanism of pre-war days, the war itself, the defeat, the Treaty of Versailles, the invasion of the Ruhr, the rise of the Jews under the Weimar system and a host of other things are responsible for the advent of National Socialism. It is quite true that the economic distress which began about 1931 helped it to sudden victory. But the return of economic prosperity to Germany would not have the opposite effect. It would not suffice to overthrow Hitlerism or satisfy German aspirations. Hitlerism is no longer the symptom but the disease itself. Cancer, I believe, is in the first instance only a symptom that something is wrong with the human body, but in course of time cancer becomes the fatal disease itself.

3. German aims in Europe to-day are political as well as economic. The granting of economic assistance can and should only be part of a general settlement with Germany, if such indeed be still possible with a disrupted Stresa front. To grant Germany financial or economic assistance before

¹ Mr. G. H. S. Pinsent.

² Volume XV, Appendix IV(a).

dealing with her political demands would be to put into her hands the most effective weapon for enforcing those demands when the time came.³

I have, etc.,

ERIC PHIPPS

³ Mr. Pinsent's notes are not reprinted here. He took the view that it was quite wrong to assume that the Nazi movement was 'simply due to economic distress and that merely by helping to remove economic distress we can abolish the Nazi movement'. He thought it unnecessary to consider at this time the suggestion of a loan to Germany. 'She is in the middle of an armaments boom and her difficulties are largely of her own making. A foreign loan would not assist her to overcome those difficulties, which must be tackled rather through a modification of her monetary, agricultural and social policy.' The one contribution that the United Kingdom could make was some moderation of her own tariff policy. In a minute of March 16 Mr. H. M. G. Jebb, a First Secretary and a Member of the League of Nations and Western Department of the Foreign Office, remarked that it had not been intended in the memorandum of January 31 to suggest the granting of financial or economic assistance to Germany before dealing with her political demands, but to consider 'how Germany could conceivably be assisted in the event of any assistance being considered desirable'. He concluded: 'As for Sir E. Phipps' general remarks about the cancerous nature of Nazism, I am afraid that I can only say that I disagree. If this argument is accepted there is nothing left for the ex-allies to do but to cut out Hitlerism with a knife. I myself believe, however, that this nearly mortal complaint will yield to the radio-active treatment of increased world trade.'

No. 44

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Mr. Eden (Received March 8, 9 a.m.)

No. 27 L.N. Telegraphic [J 2115/757/1]

GENEVA, March 8, 1936, 1.10 a.m.

Following from Mr. Jebb.¹

Oil experts committee held two meetings to-day² and as a result agreed on a draft report to committee of eighteen.

This report is based on a document drawn up by British delegation in concert with French and is considered completely satisfactory by British experts. All technical points connected with an immediate imposition of an oil embargo have now been dealt with.

Question of indirect trade (importance of which is recognised) may if the President of the committee of eighteen thinks fit be referred for special consideration to committee of experts (see my immediately following telegram).³

¹ Mr. Jebb was in Geneva as a member of the United Kingdom delegation of the Experts' Committee on Petroleum.

² This telegram was drafted on March 7.

³ Geneva telegram No. 28, not printed, referred to certain additional small points which might be raised in further discussion on March 9.

No. 45

Sir H. Kennard¹ (Warsaw) to Mr. Eden (Received March 8, 5.5 p.m.)
No. 12 Telegraphic [C 1503/4/18]

WARSAW, March 8, 1936, 2.15 p.m.

French Ambassador² informs me that Minister for Foreign Affairs asked him to visit him yesterday after receiving information as to German declarations and after a conversation he had with President of the Council and Inspector-General of the Army. Monsieur Beck stated that he felt it his duty to assure him and to request him so to inform his government that Polish Government wished to remain in close contact in this grave moment with French Government with a view to concerting any measures in conformity with the spirit of alliance between the two countries.

During the conversation Monsieur Beck emphasized that Polish-German Pact was only an agreement 'de bon voisinage' and did not extend to matters of general foreign policy.

French Ambassador was much impressed by unusual warmth with which Monsieur Beck spoke of the alliance.³

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

¹ H.M. Ambassador at Warsaw.

² M. Léon Noël.

³ In a minute of March 10 Mr. Sargent remarked that it was rather difficult to reconcile this assurance with a *communiqué* issued to the press by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 7. The text of this *communiqué* and of a protest against it by M. Noël is printed in *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 408.

No. 46

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 8, 8.40 p.m.)
No. 110 Telegraphic [C 1501/4/18]

PARIS, March 8, 1936, 6.30 p.m.

Following for War Office from Military Attaché.

French General Staff inform . . .¹ that during the past twenty-four hours the following action taken.

All leave stopped in sixth, twentieth and seventh regions. Fortified works Montmédy southward occupied and mobile formation complete with artillery concentrated in intervals in accordance with normal concentration plan for defence of frontier limited to Anti Aircraft defence with active . . .² only

¹ The text was here uncertain. The word 'me' is presumably required. Another account states that the Military Attaché, Lt.-Col. F. G. Beaumont-Nesbitt, was invited to see General Gamelin on the morning of March 8, but on arrival was told that owing to an unexpected meeting of the French Chiefs of Staff, General Gamelin had instructed his personal assistant, Commandant Petibon, to outline the measures already taken.

² The text was here uncertain; the missing word is presumably 'personnel'.

established. Preparations in hand for destruction of communications across the frontier principally railways and main roads. Troops in position to commence forthwith construction of certain new works originally planned for April. Ambassador informed at Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning that number of German troops already entered Rhineland estimated 40,000 plus 30,000 *Landespolizei* [sic] already there makes total of 70,000.

French General Staff further inform me that precautionary movements already begun in sixth, twentieth and seventh regions, are being completed during today (8th) and tomorrow (9th). They also state that intelligence reports received today [?are] indicative of further German formations in Rhineland.

No. 47

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Mr. Eden (Received March 9, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 16 Telegraphic [C 1507/4/18]

Important Private and Confidential BRUSSELS, March 8, 1936, 9.51 p.m.

While the Prime Minister yesterday insisted that the policy of the Belgian Government was strict loyalty to their Locarno and League obligations there is no reason to suppose that this indicates any hankering after any legal pound of flesh.

I have a strong conviction that the Prime Minister will willingly follow the lead of His Majesty's Government in any reasonable policy tending to increased security. This partly for internal reasons (see my telegram No. 18 Saving¹ concerning the difference between pro-French and Flemish points of view) and partly for personal esteem which he has for yourself and your political sagacity.

Incidentally I happen to know that the General Staff are pleased with the German proposals as tending to increase security of Belgium.

¹ Of February 28, not printed.

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on Germany and the Locarno Treaty
[C 2361/4/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 8, 1936

I. The German Memorandum of March 7²

The German memorandum of the 7th March raises three issues:

- (a) The legal justification attempted by the German Government for the denunciation of the Treaty of Locarno.
- (b) The reoccupation of the demilitarised zone.
- (c) The settlement which the German Government offers in place of the Locarno Treaty and the demilitarisation of the Rhineland.

(a) Attempted legal justification for German action

2. The German argument justifying their denunciation of the Locarno Treaty is that the Franco-Soviet Pact is incompatible with that treaty. In the correspondence which took place last summer, His Majesty's Government, as well as the Italian and Belgian Governments, expressed agreement with the view of the French Government that no such incompatibility existed.³ But, whatever the value of the German arguments, they cannot justify their unilateral denunciation of Locarno. The difference of opinion on this point between France and Germany was clearly a question which Germany was bound to settle in accordance with Article 3 of Locarno and the Franco-German Arbitration Convention—a course which M. Flandin had already intimated his willingness to adopt.⁴ The Germans have purported to decide themselves a question which they were bound to arbitrate, thereby violating their Locarno obligations, and have based their denunciation of Locarno on this unilateral decision.

(b) Reoccupation of Demilitarised Zone

3. As regards the reoccupation of the Rhineland, it is relevant to recall here that the possibility of negotiations between the Locarno Powers, which might have culminated in authorising its reoccupation by Germany, was already under consideration in London. A memorandum which I circulated on the 14th February, 1936 (G(36)3),⁵ states that 'taking one thing with

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 73(76). In his memoirs Lord Avon says that he prepared this paper after receiving Sir G. Clerk's report of the French reactions to the Rhineland occupation (No. 39). On Sunday, March 8, he sent it to Sir R. Vansittart, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who 'approved it enthusiastically' but suggested an amendment to the final paragraph (see note 22 below): *Facing the Dictators* (London, 1962), pp. 344–6. Only the final printed version of this document is preserved in the Foreign Office archives.

² See Enclosure in No. 42.

³ Cf. Volume XIII, Nos. 263 and 397.

⁴ The Locarno Protocol of October 1925 is printed as Cmd. 2525 (*Miscellaneous No. 11*) of 1925; the Franco-German Arbitration Convention is printed *ibid.*, Annex C, pp. 25–33.

⁵ Volume XV, No. 521.

another, it seems undesirable to adopt an attitude where we would either have to fight for the zone or abandon it in the face of a German reoccupation. It will be preferable for Great Britain and France to enter betimes into negotiations with the German Government for the surrender, on conditions, of our rights in the zone.' And a Foreign Office memorandum on the Air Pact, prepared in consultation with the Air Ministry and War Office (G(36)⁴ of the 2nd March, 1936),⁶ expressly envisages the possibility that if we pressed the German Government to discuss the Air Pact they 'would reply that they will raise the question of the continuance of the demilitarised zone; but in many respects such a reply might be to the good.' Indeed, in the communication which I made to the German Ambassador on the 6th March (Foreign Office despatch No. 296 of the 6 March)⁷ I had this possibility very definitely in mind, though, of course, no indication of the kind was given to Herr von Hoesch.

4. The German Government, by the reoccupation of the zone effected on the morning of the 7th March, have thus not by that action produced a result, so far as the demilitarised zone itself is concerned, which we were not prepared ultimately to contemplate. It is the manner of their action, as I informed the German Ambassador yesterday, which we deplore. Herr Hitler might have demanded arbitration as to the compatibility of the Franco-Soviet Treaty with Locarno and awaited the result. This would have been the right course and, indeed, M. Flandin had already offered to follow it. He might have declared himself no longer bound by Locarno, and asked for negotiations to replace it by another treaty without the demilitarised zone provision. This would have been plausible, although contrary to the terms of the treaty. He has chosen, however, to eliminate all negotiations by *reoccupying* the zone at once. It is this which is so highly provocative and puts Herr Hitler entirely in the wrong. He has evidently taken this extreme course (*vide* Berlin telegrams Nos. 51⁸ and 54⁹) against military advice and under the pressure of General Göring and the Nazi extremists. Among his motives was probably the fact that he wished to act before British rearmament brought renewed confidence to the French and increased vigour to the League. He may also have wished to act while Italy was still at issue with the League and with her Locarno partners.

5. Herr Hitler's action is alarming because of the fresh confirmation which it affords of the scant respect paid by German Governments to the sanctity of treaties. Moreover, he has complicated the negotiations. For by reoccupying the Rhineland he has deprived us of the possibility of making to him a concession which might otherwise have been a useful bargaining counter in our hands in the general negotiations with Germany which we had it in contemplation to initiate. Such negotiations are now inevitable, but we shall enter them at a disadvantage, for we have lost the bargaining counter to which I have just referred. Further, we shall have the utmost difficulty in persuading other European Powers to enter into fresh treaties which must obviously depend for their value on the reliance which can be placed on

⁶ No. 4.

⁷ See No. 29.

⁸ No. 27.

⁹ No. 34.

Germany's promises. This difficulty will become particularly apparent in regard to the readmission of Germany to the League of Nations (see paragraph 13).

(c) *German Suggestions for Future*

6. The 'system of peaceful security for Europe' which the German Government propose in the place of the Locarno Treaty and the demilitarised zone may now be considered.

7. The first suggestion is that the German Government should negotiate with France and Belgium for the 'creation of a zone demilitarised on both sides . . . on conditions of complete equality.' This, of course, is impracticable so far at least as any immediate future is concerned; and may be dismissed at once as made for propaganda purposes only. France has spent at least £40 million on the fortification of her north-eastern frontier and Belgium has also spent large sums. These fortifications allow of no space for a zone on the French and Belgian side of the frontier. It is impossible to suggest that France and Belgium could consider the scrapping of their fortifications in exchange for a German promise, in which no confidence could be placed, that the German demilitarised zone would be observed.

8. Points 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the German suggestions may perhaps be considered together. This proposal is for a non-aggression pact between Germany, France and Belgium (duration twenty-five years), guaranteed by Britain and Italy, and to which the Netherlands should also be a party if that country and the other contracting Powers so desired. This system is to be strengthened by an air pact 'calculated to prevent the danger of sudden air attacks in an automatic and effective manner.'

9. This proposal may be said to coincide generally with our desiderata; though the participation of the Netherlands of course raises issues on which we ourselves are still undecided. The latest pronouncement on the subject is the report of the Chiefs of Staffs, dated the 20th November last—D.P.R. 48 (C.O.S. 413).¹⁰

10. One would hope that the reference to an air pact, which would 'prevent the danger of sudden air attacks in an automatic and effective manner,' would make it possible to include the bilateral arrangements to which the French Government attach so much importance.

11. In point 6 the German Government 'repeat the offer to conclude with the States bordering Germany in the East non-aggression pacts similarly as with Poland'; and Lithuania is now included 'on condition that the guaranteed autonomy of the Statute of Memel is effectively developed'. It is not clear whether this means the maintenance of the present statute or the grant of some further measure of autonomy.

12. The German 'offer' of non-aggression pacts dates from the winter of 1933 to 1934, and was finally defined in Herr Hitler's speech of the 21st May, 1935, in which he said that 'the German Government are ready on principle to conclude pacts of non-aggression with their various neighbouring

¹⁰ Cf. Volume XIII, p. ix, and Volume XV, No. 325.

States.’¹¹ At that time Lithuania was specifically excluded because of the situation in Memel. As a matter of fact, the only States bordering on Germany, even if ‘in the East’ is interpreted in the widest possible way are Lithuania, Poland (which already has a non-aggression treaty for ten years), Czechoslovakia and Austria. But it is not at all clear whether this offer applies to Czechoslovakia and Austria. All that can be said is that at one time Germany was willing to give Czechoslovakia a non-aggression treaty and offered it to her. As regards Austria, it may be recalled that in his speech of the 21st May, 1935, Herr Hitler stated that ‘Germany neither intends nor wishes to interfere in the domestic affairs of Austria, to annex Austria, or to attach that country to her.’

13. Point 7 declares Germany’s readiness to re-enter the League of Nations. It would be rash to underestimate the difficulties connected with her readmittance. Re-election to the League requires a two-thirds majority of the Assembly, while a permanent seat on the Council, which Germany would certainly demand, requires unanimity on the Council as well as a simple majority of the Assembly. Moreover, a candidate for election must give ‘effective guarantees of its sincere intention to observe its international obligations.’

14. If points 6 and 7 in the German proposals are taken together, it may be hoped that they correspond to the demand which it was proposed to make of Germany as regards the situation in Central and Eastern Europe in Memorandum G(36)6¹² submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Germany on the 27th February. It is there stated that ‘Germany would have to subscribe to the principle that in extending her influence in Central Europe she would not act in these regions in a manner which would be in conflict with the principles which we profess under the Covenant, an act which would therefore compel us either to oppose Germany or to disavow our obligations.’

15. Account must now be taken of omissions from the German proposals. There is no reference to land or air armaments limitation. The opinion has already been expressed that further attempts at the limitation of land armaments were useless for the present (see Foreign Office memorandum of the 2nd March, G(36)9).¹³ As regards air limitation, the Air Ministry memorandum of the 2nd March, 1936 (G(36)5),¹⁴ showed the great difficulties of the question. The Foreign Office view was that none the less an attempt ought to be made to secure it, though in view of its difficulty it should be made an indispensable condition for the conclusion of an air pact.

16. The colonial question is mentioned in Point 7 of the German offer as a matter in which German ‘equality of rights’ is still incomplete and as one which will have to be settled ‘in the course of a reasonable period’ after Germany’s return to the League. None the less, as the German Government

¹¹ Cf. Volume XIII, No. 222.

¹² Not here printed. This memorandum (R 1167/1167/67) by Mr. O’Malley was supplemented by detailed statistics which were circulated to the Cabinet Committee on March 8.

¹³ No. 5.

¹⁴ See No. 4, note 3.

warn us of their 'expectation' in the matter, this is a problem which we shall have to face at once, if we decide to favour Germany's return to the League.

17. It is interesting to note that other matters which have for some time been regarded as covered by the doctrine of equality of rights are not mentioned. Thus, there is no mention either of the German treaty obligation of the maintenance of free passage through the Kiel Canal or of the German obligation to admit an international régime for certain of their rivers, though at one time Baron von Neurath definitely mentioned these matters as examples of lack of equality of rights. There is also no mention of the question of the demilitarisation of Heligoland. This is not covered by Part V of the Treaty, and it has not so far been raised by the German Government, though there is reason to believe that the island is in fact being refortified. Danzig is not mentioned.

II. *Positions of France, Belgium and Italy*

18. *France.* M. Flandin informed His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris on the 7th March (Paris telegram No. 108)¹⁵ that:

- (1) The French Government did not wish to take up an isolated position, but to concert with the other Locarno Powers in order to bring the matter before the Council of the League.
- (2) They wanted a meeting of the Locarno Powers in Paris, and of the Council in Geneva.
- (3) Though no definite decision was yet taken, the French Government were thinking of asking the Council to condemn the action of Germany in terms analogous to those used in condemning Germany's rearmament on the 17th May, 1935.¹⁶
- (4) The French Government had asked the Belgian Government to join with them in communicating formally to the Council the fact of Germany's violation.
- (5) The French Government were not definitely opposed to negotiations with Germany, but they had little confidence in Germany's word, and they could not negotiate under threat of the denunciation of Locarno and under the menace of a remilitarised zone and the loss of French security.

19. *Belgium.* The Belgian Chargé d'Affaires informed me on the 7th March that the Belgian Government would prefer that Germany's violation should be brought to the Council's notice by all the Locarno signatories rather than by France and Belgium alone, and that the Belgian Government would like a preliminary meeting of the Locarno Powers before the Council with the least possible delay. He has been told in reply to the first question that His Majesty's Government do not think it necessary to join with the French and Belgian Governments in the communication to the Council.¹⁷

¹⁵ No. 39.

¹⁶ Should read 'April': cf. No. 39, note 3.

¹⁷ Cf. No. 40, note 3.

20. *Italy.* Italy has given no indication of her attitude.

III. *Future Policy of His Majesty's Government*

21. The myth is now exploded that Herr Hitler only repudiates treaties imposed on Germany by force. We must be prepared for him to repudiate any treaty even if freely negotiated (a) when it becomes inconvenient; and (b) when Germany is sufficiently strong and the circumstances are otherwise favourable for doing so.

22. On the other hand, owing to Germany's material strength and power of mischief in Europe, it is in our interest to conclude with her as far-reaching and enduring a settlement as possible whilst Herr Hitler is still in the mood to do so. But on entering upon this policy we must bear in mind that, whatever time-limits may be laid down in such a settlement, Herr Hitler's signature can only be considered as valid under the conditions specified above.

23. It has become necessary, therefore, to distinguish carefully between agreements which, within these limitations, are (a) advantageous and safe; (b) unimportant but expedient; and (c) dangerous. In using the word 'dangerous' it is not intended to imply that such agreements are for this reason to be excluded *ab initio*, the point which it is desired to make is that they involve a definite risk which must be taken into account.

24. Generally speaking, *safe and advantageous* agreements would be those giving an immediate and more or less lasting relief from the present international tension, and the durability of which might be assumed by reason of the fact that Herr Hitler would not be making any concrete concessions or submitting to any inconvenient restrictions—in fact, agreements in which the spirit rather than the letter was the essential element. Perhaps the Air Pact and the non-aggression pacts and the return of Germany to the League might be placed in this category.

25. *Expedient but unimportant* agreements would be those which might be useful for the time being for the improvement of the international atmosphere or in order to anticipate unilateral action by Germany, but which would not contain stipulations of vital importance to us. In this category would fall all agreements for cancelling minor restrictions imposed on Germany, such as the international rivers régime, the fortification of Heligoland, etc., in which Germany would be the sole beneficiary.

26. '*Dangerous*' agreements would clearly be those in which we agreed with Germany to mutual restrictions or to mutual concessions of a serious character. In such cases it would have to be assumed that Germany might, in given circumstances, repudiate the restrictions, and, if it were within her power to do so, withdraw her concessions; whereas we would continue to consider ourselves bound for the duration of the treaty in all respects. In this category we must expect the French and other Powers to place certain kinds of armaments limitation, agreements for the cession of colonies in return for counter concessions on Germany's part, and undertakings by Germany not to interfere with Austria. But, as stated above, the danger of

repudiation by Germany need not in every case mean that an agreement with Germany on these subjects is not worth seeking. It is clear, however, that other countries, and particularly France, more suspicious than we are of German good faith, will be inclined to emphasise the dangers of agreement in these cases.

27. Bearing the above considerations in mind, the immediate problem before His Majesty's Government and its solution may be visualised as follows:

28. We must discourage any military action by France against Germany. A possible course which might have its advocates would be for the Locarno signatories to call upon Germany to evacuate the Rhineland. It is difficult now to suppose that Herr Hitler could agree to such a demand, and it certainly should not be made unless the Powers, who made it, were prepared to enforce it by military action. Fortunately, M. Flandin has said that France will not act alone (i.e., under paragraph 3 of article 4 of Locarno), but will take the matter to the Council (i.e., under paragraph 2 of article 4 of Locarno). This he must be encouraged to do. But we must beware lest the French public, if further irritated or frightened, get restless at such a slow and indecisive action and demand retaliatory action of a military character such, for instance, as the reoccupation of the Saar. Such a development must be avoided if possible.

29. While we obviously cannot object to the Council adopting, under article 4(2)¹⁸ of Locarno, a 'finding' that Germany has violated the demilitarised zone provisions, this ought to be on the distinct understanding that it is not to be followed by a French attack on Germany and a request for our armed assistance under that article. An understanding, therefore, as to procedure at the Council between the Locarno Powers is essential before the Council meets, and arrangements are being made to this end.

30. We must be ready at the Council to offer the French some satisfaction in return for their acquiescence in this tearing up of articles 42 and 43 of Versailles and of the whole of Locarno. Herr Hitler's offers to negotiate a new 'Locarno' and to return to the League will not be enough. In the face of this fresh and gross insult to the sanctity of treaties, it will be difficult to persuade the French to sign any fresh agreement with Germany in present circumstances. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, seeing that they have already been refusing to sign a naval agreement with Germany because of the latter's repudiation of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles last year. Some measure of satisfaction will therefore have to be found before Herr Hitler's 'offers' can be taken into consideration. This is clear from the French views summarised in paragraph 18(5) above.

31. The following measures of satisfaction are conceivable: (a) M. Flandin

¹⁸ *Note in original:* Article 4(2) of the Treaty of Locarno: 'As soon as the Council of the League of Nations is satisfied that such violation or breach has been committed, it will notify its findings without delay to the Powers signatory of the present treaty, who severally agree that in such case they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against whom the act complained of is directed.'

has suggested a formal condemnation by the Council of Germany's action on the lines of the condemnation administered last year in respect of the repudiation of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. In this connexion it might possibly be proposed to ask The Hague Court to pronounce upon the German arguments regarding the incompatibility of the Franco-Russian Pact with Locarno. It is not thought that this would be a wise course. (b) The French may want to follow this up by applying the Council Resolution of April 1935 that the unilateral repudiation of a treaty by a State, whether a member of the League or not, should, in the event of such repudiation endangering peace, call into play all appropriate measures on the part of members of the League, including in particular measures of an economic and financial character, the nature of which was, however, not determined by the Council. We might—indeed, will probably have to—agree to satisfaction¹⁹ (a), but we ought to resist satisfaction (b) both on the ground that it would be impracticable, and also because it would be inconsistent with any idea of negotiation with Germany for a new settlement.

32. In return for satisfaction (a) we ought to try and get the Council—France and Belgium agreeing—to recommend that the complainant Powers should now proceed to put Germany's good faith to the test—by entering into negotiations with her with the object of (a) establishing a new 'Locarno' on the lines suggested by Herr Hitler; (b) concluding an air pact on the lines suggested by us; (c) bringing about some sort of settlement in Eastern and Central Europe (it won't amount to much) on the basis of the bilateral non-aggression pacts offered by Herr Hitler; (d) arranging for Germany's unconditional return to the League. The Council would, in fact, give Great Britain, France, Belgium and Italy a mandate and carry on these negotiations with Germany with instructions to report periodically to the Council as to their progress.

33. The essential thing will be to induce or cajole France to accept this mandate. The trouble is that we are in a bad position to browbeat her into what we think reasonableness, because, if she wishes to do so, she can always hold us to our Locarno obligation and call upon us to join with her in turning the German forces out of the Rhineland. The strength of our position lies in the fact that France is not in the mood for a military adventure of this sort. Unfortunately, between military action on the one hand and friendly negotiation on the other, there lies the policy of sulking and passive obstruction, and it is this policy to which the French Government, in their weakness, will be inclined to have recourse, and out of which we shall have to persuade them.²⁰

¹⁹ The words 'on the lines of first sentence of' were inserted in the filed copy at this point.

²⁰ When the Cabinet met to consider the Rhineland crisis on Monday morning, March 9, it had before it this memorandum (C.P. 73(36)), two despatches (No. 42 and No. 49 below) and various other reports received by the Foreign Office from Berlin and Paris. Mr. Eden explained that he had acceded to M. Flandin's request that he should attend a preliminary meeting of the Locarno powers in Paris on the following day, Tuesday, March 10, after which the representatives of all the Locarno powers would leave for Geneva, where a further meeting would be held. The Cabinet had been given at the outset of the meeting

34. It will be essential, under present conditions, to do something to steady the situation, and I propose accordingly, and as an immediate step, that a statement should be made in the House to-morrow²¹ to the following effect:

'His Majesty's Government regard themselves, during the consideration, which will obviously be necessary, of the situation created by the German denunciation of the treaty, as still in honour bound to come to the assistance of France or Belgium in the event of an actual attack on them by Germany, which would constitute a violation of article 2 of Locarno, and to the assistance of Germany in the event of such an attack upon her by France or Belgium.'²²

A. E.

a statement which Mr. Eden proposed to read in the House of Commons the same evening: this statement was agreed to after being read paragraph by paragraph and extensively amended. For Mr. Eden's statement to the House of Commons see 309 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1808-13.

²¹ The words 'which would include a passage' were inserted in the filed copy at this point.

²² On Sir R. Vansittart's suggestion the original wording of this statement had been redrafted to make it clear 'that our guarantee was to France and Belgium alone'. The passage was subsequently redrafted by the Cabinet to read as follows: '... In case there should be any misunderstanding about our position as a signatory of the Locarno Treaty, His Majesty's Government think it necessary to say that, should there take place during the period which will be necessary for the consideration of the new situation to which I have referred, any actual attack upon France or Belgium which would constitute a violation of Article 2 of Locarno, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the German repudiation of the Treaty, would regard themselves as in honour bound to come, in the manner provided in the Treaty, to the assistance of the country attacked.' It appears in substantially this form in Mr. Eden's statement to Parliament (see note 20).

No. 49

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 432 [C 1505/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 8, 1936*

Sir,

The French Ambassador came to see me this morning when he stated that M. Flandin was anxious to know whether I could come to Paris to-morrow afternoon for a meeting of the signatories of the Locarno Treaty preliminary to the Council at Geneva.

2. I replied that I regretted that it would hardly be possible for me to reach Paris before late Monday night¹ at the earliest. There was a Cabinet tomorrow morning and it was important that I should make a statement to the House of Commons in the afternoon.² Moreover, I wished to express to the Ambassador my own strong preference for a meeting in Geneva rather than in Paris. The Council must take place in Geneva, and surely it would

¹ March 9.

² Cf. No. 48, note 20.

be the normal procedure for a meeting of the Locarno Signatories to take place the day before in the same place, and there seemed to me to be considerable inconvenience in having a meeting in Paris say on Monday and then no Council meeting before Thursday. It was clear to me that Thursday was the earliest day on which a Council could physically be summoned, since some of the members had to come long journeys.

3. The Ambassador said that he fully appreciated all the difficulties, but none the less he knew that the French Government were extremely anxious to have a meeting, even if it were only a short one and of the most preliminary character, in Paris. After all it was French public opinion that was most affected by what had happened. It was necessary to do what was possible to reassure it, and he was confident that a meeting in Paris would be most valuable in this respect. Moreover, the Belgian Government had already accepted the invitation and he thought it possible that the Italian representative would be on his way by train this evening from Rome.

4. I said that I fully appreciated the French point of view. Nonetheless I thought that Geneva would have been the better place for this meeting. In any event we were at present due at Geneva on Tuesday for a meeting of the Committee of Thirteen. The Ambassador maintained that it would be possible for M. Flandin and myself to be represented at that meeting and not to attend in person.

5. Finally the Ambassador undertook to communicate with M. Flandin and to speak of my preference for Geneva. He thought it might perhaps be possible to postpone the Committee of Thirteen till Wednesday, to have a short preliminary meeting in Paris on Tuesday, and to leave Paris for Geneva on Tuesday night.³

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

³ According to Foreign Office telegram No. 48 of March 8 to Sir G. Clerk, despatched at 8 p.m., M. Corbin saw Mr. Eden again on the evening of March 8, and explained that it was imperative that M. Flandin should make a statement on the situation in the French Chamber on Tuesday afternoon. He hoped therefore that Mr. Eden would agree to a meeting of the Locarno signatories in Paris on Tuesday morning, after which 'We would all proceed to Geneva Tuesday night'. Mr. Eden agreed to this procedure 'on the understanding that the conversations in Paris would be of a definitely preliminary nature'.

No. 50

Letter from Mr. Eden to Mr. Baldwin

[C 1937/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 8, 1936*

In¹ view of probable developments arising out of the German memorandum it seems to me that there are three matters which require early consideration

¹ Formal opening and concluding words are omitted from the filed copy.

by the competent committees of the Cabinet and Committee of Imperial Defence.

The first is the recommendation of the Chiefs-of-Staff's Sub-Committee of February 8th, 1935 (C.I.D. 1161B²) that the Air Pact should not be concluded or at any rate ratified until the armaments part of the settlement has been negotiated. I suggest that the Chiefs-of-Staff should be asked to make a new report on this matter. It will be remembered that in paper C.P. 129(35)³ of June, 1935, the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and Air recommended that 'if in the course of the negotiations it were found that the conclusion of an Air Pact was possible but that the conclusion of a limitation agreement was either impossible or indefinitely postponed then we are clearly of opinion that we ought to go for the conclusion of the Air Pact in order that we may get one positive objective at any rate.'

The second point is that raised by Hitler's offer to include Holland in the system of bilateral non-aggression treaties in the West. As you know the Chiefs-of-Staff reported on November 20th, 1935, (D.P.R. 48, C.O.S. 413) on the question of the inclusion of Holland in the Air Pact.⁴ Should not this report be brought up to date in the light of Hitler's offer and then considered by the Committee of Imperial Defence?

The third point is that of colonies. This arises out of Hitler's statement that if he returns to the League, it will be on the expectation that Germany will get colonies soon. You will remember that we decided not to circulate a memorandum on the colonial question to the German Sub-Committee of the Cabinet. But I think that a memorandum ought now to be prepared considering the question of the possible transfer of a colonial mandate or mandates to Germany in all its aspects. For the preparation of such a memorandum the Colonial Office would presumably be responsible but they would no doubt prepare it in consultation with the Foreign Office, the Dominions Office, the three Service Departments and the Board of Trade.⁵

ANTHONY EDEN

² Not printed.

³ Volume XIII, No. 364.

⁴ See No. 48, note 10; cf. Volume XV, No. 304. There appears to be no reference to this document or to the relevant discussion about Holland in N. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy* (London, 1976), vol. i, but pp. 254-68 describe the main discussions of the D.R.C. from July 1935 to March 1936, culminating in the acceptance in the main by the Ministerial D.P.R.C. of the D.R.C.'s recommendations. These pointed in general to a new phase of rearmament culminating not earlier than 1939. Mr. Baldwin presented an outline of the programme, as the 'Statement Relating to Defence' (Cmd. 5107), to the House of Commons on March 9.

⁵ This letter was drafted in the Central Department for signature by Mr. Eden. A note by Mr. Wigram of April 28 refers to it as the 'origin of the interdepartmental committee on colonies'. Mr. Baldwin acted promptly. On his direction a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was set up on March 9, 1936, to consider in all its aspects the question of the possible transfer of a colonial mandate or mandates to Germany. The chairman was the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Plymouth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. It included representatives of the Foreign, Dominions, and Colonial Offices, the Board of Trade, and the service departments. It reported on June 9, 1936; see Appendix III to this volume.

No. 51

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 9, 10 a.m.)

No. 114 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1508/4/18]

PARIS, March 9, 1936

My telegram No. 111.¹

Communiqué issued at close of meeting of Council of Ministers on March 8th states that government have studied German memorandum and consider it unacceptable. Government have therefore approved the decision already taken to inform the League in accordance with the Locarno Pact and to open consultation with the other Locarno signatories.

Communiqué also states that the Ministers of War, Marine and Air have been authorised to prepare such measures as may seem advisable to supplement those already taken (see my telegram No. 110).²

¹ This telegram summarized an advance copy of the French communication to the League of Nations approved by the Council of Ministers that morning: see *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, p. 312, for the text of this telegram.

² No. 46.

No. 52

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 9, 10 a.m.)

No. 63 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1506/4/18]

BERLIN, March 9, 1936

Ministry of War have informed Military Attaché¹ that movement of German troops into the Rhineland was completed on March 8th.

Troops consist of 19 Infantry Battalions, 13 Artillery *Abteilungen* and some tanks and anti-aircraft guns.

Please inform the War Office at once.²

¹ Colonel F. E. Hotblack.

² In a further telegram, No. 68 from Berlin of even date, received 7 p.m., the Military Attaché reported the Ministry of War as stating that the total number of troops in the former demilitarized zone was 30,000. Sir E. Phipps's telegram No. 70 of March 10 said that a German General Staff officer had confirmed to the Military Attaché that 'the Chancellor's decision to enter into demilitarised zone was taken very suddenly and against the advice of General Staff who thought and still think the risk was too great. . . It seems that the General Staff anticipate that France will demand withdrawal of the German troops failing which France may attempt to drive them out by force. This they feel would certainly mean war.'

No. 53

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 9, 10.20 a.m.)

No. 64 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1511/4/18]

Immediate

BERLIN, March 9, 1936

This morning's Berlin press conveys the impressions [*sic*] that Germany's entry into the demilitarized zone is welcomed with enthusiasm by the London Sunday newspapers.

Tribute is paid to British calm and sense of realities which are compared unfavourably with French excitability and unreason.¹

¹ A minute by Mr. Torr, a First Secretary in the Central Department, reads: 'Our press has taken it calmly of course: but this is pure propaganda. It is a lie however which I do not see how we can catch up with . . . C. J. W. Torr. 9.3.'

No. 54

Foreign Office to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 50 Telegraphic [C 1616/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 9, 1936, 9.20 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State from Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.¹

You may like to know that personal feeling of all Dominion High Commissioners at meeting this evening (none of them had any instructions from their Governments) was entirely in favour of policy underlying your statement today.

¹ Mr. M. MacDonald. Mr. Eden travelled to Paris with Lord Halifax, Lord Privy Seal, on the evening of March 9 after making his statement in the House of Commons; cf. No. 48, note 20.

No. 55

Letter from Mr. Nigel Law¹ to Mr. Sargent

[C 1643/4/18]

March 9, 1936

My dear Moley,

The sentiment of the City is overwhelmingly pro-German. No doubt you expected as much. I confess I had never realised before the depth of anti-French feeling which forms the background of all foreign political judgments here. Naturally there are many degrees of this sentiment. The

¹ A former First Secretary in the Foreign Office, now working for Messrs. Jessel, Toynbee & Co.

most extreme are the 'Daily Mail' readers, who, though they completely disregarded Lord Rothermere's advice in the Hoare-Laval crisis, are now content to repeat the parrot-cry of 'You can't keep down for ever a nation of 67 million.' These people know nothing of the Locarno Treaty or of Hitler's previous acceptance of it, and confuse it in their minds with the 'unjust' Treaty of Versailles. Next come those who disregard the denunciation of Locarno and affirm the right of Germany to re-occupy the demilitarized zone. They look hopefully towards a new era in Europe based on an acceptance of Hitler's offer. Lastly there are those who, when dislodged by argument from the contention that it is any good making a new treaty with a country which has just repudiated obligations freely entered into and confirmed quite recently by the Führer himself, declare that it is really no use making treaties with anyone and that heavily armed isolation is the only policy which can give any hope of security. Hardly anyone seems to give a thought for the future and to the implication of Hitler's remarks on the colonial question. Such people appear to believe that even if the colonial question is raised there is no reason why Germany should come into conflict with Great Britain. They admit that Germany may be contemplating an Eastern adventure as soon as her Western frontier has been fortified but they see no chance of our being drawn in. There remain a few who admit that our obligations under Locarno may force us to acquiesce in financial and economic sanctions against Germany. But even they consider that such measures would have little or no effect on Germany because her economic policy has already landed her in a system of self imposed sanctions.

The above are the first reactions of the City and I feel bound to give them to you, however reluctantly. It does not follow that these are the reactions of the country at large. I have seen too often the extent the views of the City differ from those of the country on foreign affairs to suppose that on this occasion they are identical.² Nor does it necessarily follow that second thoughts will be as extreme as those described above. Much will depend on the leadership which the Government may give. You must remember that the City always minimizes dangers at first because the financial wish is often the father of the political thought. Consequently it concentrates its attention on Hitler's new promises and chooses to forget the breaches of past ones.

One totally different opinion we have heard today from a German non-Aryan whose family still has powerful financial interests in Germany. He expressed the belief that the imposition of sanctions would dislodge

² Mr. Eden, however, remarked that 'British opinion, so far as it was shown in the press, was even less sympathetic to the French case than I had expected'. The incident in which, on the morning of March 9, a taxi driver said to him: 'I suppose Jerry can do what he likes in his own back garden, can't he?' is recorded in *Facing the Dictators*, p. 346. He noticed that the leading article in *The Times* of March 9, 'A Chance to Rebuild', attributed Herr Hitler's attitude to fear of encirclement. The article included the statement: 'British opinion will be nearly unanimous in its desire to turn an untoward proceeding to account and, far from weakening the régime of treaties, to seize the opportunity of broadening and strengthening the collective system which opens with the German offer of re-entry.'

Hitler from power within three months. This sounds to me optimistic; but, as I do not know what the real condition and state of opinion in Germany may be, I give it for what it is worth.

The Exchange Fund has been holding the franc at 75 all day against heavy sales from Paris. The crisis may bring an embargo on Gold exports from France.

Yours ever,
NIGEL

No. 56

Letter from Mr. Thomas Jones, C.H.,¹ to Mr. Eden

[C 1814/4/18]

10 YORK BUILDINGS, LONDON, W.C.2, March 9, 1936

Dear Eden,

Toynbee told us this story at Blickling² yesterday. I thought you would like to hear it so I got Toynbee to dictate this.

Yrs.
T. J.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 56

Professor Toynbee's account³ of an interview with Herr Hitler on February 28, 1936

BLICKLING HALL, March 8, 1936

1. Herr Hitler gave me an interview the Friday before last (28th February 1936). He spoke for an hour and three-quarters.⁴ The other people present

¹ Secretary of the Pilgrim Trust; a former Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet and Secretary of the Economic Advisory Council.

² Blickling Hall, Aylsham, Norfolk, was the seat of the Marquess of Lothian. On Saturday, March 7, he entertained a party consisting of Mr. Norman Davis (head of the American delegation to the Naval Conference in 1935) and Mrs. Davis, Viscount Massey (High Commissioner for Canada in the United Kingdom) and Mrs. Massey, Lord and Lady Astor, Sir Thomas and Lady Inskip, Sir Walter Layton (Chairman of the *News Chronicle*) and Lady Layton, Professor A. J. Toynbee, and Mr. T. Jones. The ensuing conversations are described by Mr. Jones in *A Diary with Letters, 1931-1950* (London, 1954), pp. 179-82. In a discussion after dinner certain recommendations were agreed, and were telephoned to Mr. Baldwin on the morning of March 8. They included, 'Welcome Hitler's declaration whole-heartedly'; 'Condemn entry of German troops into forbidden zone'; 'Palliate offence as the last and least of a series of breaches of Part V of the Treaty'; 'Go on with our rearmament programme'; 'Accept Hitler's declaration as made in good faith and put his bona fides to the test by trying it out'. The conclusion was, 'This is the last "bus" and all turns on S. B. catching it tomorrow'. Professor Toynbee described his interview in a walk with Mr. Jones on Sunday morning. Copies of his account were sent to both Mr. Eden and Mr. Baldwin.

³ The circumstances in which the interview took place are described in Arnold J. Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (London, 1967), Chapter 22, which includes an abbreviated account of Herr Hitler's remarks.

⁴ According to *Acquaintances* (*ibid.*, p. 282) the 'lecture' lasted for 130 minutes, after which Professor Toynbee was able to ask one question.

were von Ribbentrop and two members⁵ of Hitler's and von Ribbentrop's personal staffs. This was the day of publication of his interview to [*sic*] de Jouvenel,⁶ and just after the ratification⁷ of the Franco-Russian Treaty by the Chamber in Paris. Immediately after the interview, Hitler flew off with von Ribbentrop to Berchtesgaden. This was a sudden decision, for I had been going to see von Ribbentrop again in Berlin last Sunday. I imagine that the policy which Hitler has now carried out was only decided upon by him during the week-end (just after I saw him) in answer to the French Chamber's action.

2. In talking to me, Hitler covered the whole field of German foreign policy, leading off with his relations with Soviet Russia and then passing over to his relations with England. The points that most struck me in what he said were these.

(a) His personal mission is to be the saviour from Communism, not only for Germany, but for the whole of Europe.

(b) He feels himself bound to think and act in European terms, and not merely in German terms, because, if the European Powers fall into conflict with one another again, then, in his view, Communism will swamp them all—including his own National-Socialist Germany. Germany, he said, cannot hold out against Communism by herself.

(c) The key to European appeasement and cooperation is an understanding between England and Germany. In pleading for this, he showed still stronger feelings than when he was painting his picture of the dangers of Bolshevism. He did not suggest that the Anglo-German understanding, for which he was frankly very eager, was to be made at any other country's expense—not even at Russia's expense.

(d) He emphatically disclaimed any hostility to, or designs against, the British Empire. So far from that, he said that he regarded the Empire as Europe's best asset for the struggle—which Europe would have to make with her united strength—to hold her own against the outer world. In saying this, he insisted, at the same time, that Germany must be readmitted to her pre-war share in the common colonial work of Europe; and he of course took the line that she had been deprived of her colonies unjustly and under false pretences. Germany's honour could only be restored by a symbolic act of a concrete kind. She must have her colonies back. But when once she had been readmitted to her proper place among the European Powers, she would take her share in defending Europe's position in the world. The only good point in the stupid (*dumm*) foreign policy of the ex-Kaiser had been his plea for European solidarity against the Yellow Peril. He (Hitler) if he got back his colonies, would then regard Singapore as the eastern frontier of Europe. And if the English, with their many commitments all over the world, found themselves in need of help, he would then be eager to give it to us, because England's cause would be Europe's cause,

⁵ According to *Acquaintances*, p. 278, four persons were present (including von Neurath) in addition to Hitler and von Ribbentrop.

⁶ Cf. Volume XV, No. 554.

⁷ Note in original: Feb. 27.

and therefore Germany's. (N.B. He meant military help, and he was thinking in very concrete terms. He mentioned 'six divisions and some warships! [']')

(e) He disclaimed any ambition to conquer a great empire for Germany in Eastern Europe. This came out very explicitly, because the one word that I got in edgewise was a question on this point. I expressed a fear that, in case of a collision between Germany and Russia, Germany would beat Russia again, as she beat her in the last war, and that Germany would then reconquer all those East-European territories, up to the Ukraine inclusive, which she held in 1918, at the moment of the Armistice. His reaction to this suggestion of mine was, I am pretty sure, a spontaneous one, and not a piece of acting. He made rather a whimsical face at von Ribbentrop and the other Germans present, and then he put his hand over his own face and giggled. He was indeed gratified, he said, at the compliment that I was paying to Germany's military power if I thought that she could really repeat, on the East, what she had achieved in 1918. He did not, himself, rate his own military strength so high. But, quite apart from that, he did not *want*, for his Germany, a great subject empire in Eastern Europe. He regarded these East-European populations as inferior (*minderwertig*) and he did not want to have them inside his system. Even if he could conquer them, it would take a permanent garrison of 600,000 German troops to hold them down. The fundamental principle of National-Socialism was to build up a Reich on an exclusively national basis—reuniting the whole German nation, but not including anybody else.

In spite of *Mein Kampf* and in spite of 'the Rosenberg Plan'⁸ I have a very strong conviction that, on this rather vital point, Hitler was quite sincere in what he said to me.

He went even further. 'I want England's friendship', he said; 'And, if you English will make friends with us, you may name your conditions—including, if you like, conditions about Eastern Europe.'

I was much struck by this last sentence, because (if I am right) he has always hitherto shown an unwillingness to tie his hands in the East as part of the price for coming to an understanding with the Western Powers. Considering the attitude towards Russia which he is bound to maintain for the sake of his own position in Germany, I thought this rather a notable concession on his part, which would be worth exploring.

(f) About Austria he said: 'I am not bothering myself, because Austria is bound to fall to us sooner or later.' (He produced some figures about the decline in the Austrian birthrate as evidence that Austria was being ruined, socially and morally, by the present regime).

(g) About 'the louse-eaten Lithuanians' (as he called them), he said that,

⁸ Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946) joined the Nazi Party in its early days and was made editor of the party newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, in 1921. He soon became well known for his extreme anti-Communist and anti-Semitic views, and expounded his plans for ruthless German expansion eastwards in *Der Zukunftsweg einer deutschen Aussenpolitik* (1927) and other writings. He was given charge of the foreign-policy office of the Nazi Party in 1931, but seems to have been too ineffectual a personality to establish any real dominance in Nazi German politics.

if he chose, he could settle his differences with Lithuania any day by military force, without using more than his East Prussian divisions, but that his grievance against Lithuania was not worth a European war. He took us to task for first having allowed the Lithuanians to occupy Memel by force, and then having allowed them to violate the Memel Statute which we had undertaken to guarantee.

(h) He spoke still more bitterly about our support of the constitutional opposition parties in Danzig, whom he described in abusive terms (as a handful of good-for-nothing people). This was the point on which he seemed least objective. The non-success of the Nazis in wiping out the Danzig opposition had evidently disconcerted him.

(i) Though he named almost every important country in Europe in the course of the interview, he very markedly omitted all mention of Italy or Signor Mussolini.

(j) He mentioned Japan quite early in the interview, à propos of Russia. He knew, he said, that one of the things that was making the English take a more friendly line towards Russia was our anxiety over the present imperialistic policy of Japan. But if we wanted a friend in need against Japan, why should that friend be Russia? Why should it not be Germany?

This line about Japan was interesting, because it was another piece of evidence for the strength of Hitler's desire for our friendship. The implication was that he would rather—if he had to make the choice—have an Anglo-German understanding than a German-Japanese alliance against Russia. Considering the strength of his anti-Russian feeling, I thought this rather impressive.

3. The weakness of Hitler's position is that he has always to be playing a dramatic part in the sight of his own German audience. Up to now, his role has been that of the champion against Bolshevism. This role is dangerous internationally, because it compels Hitler to go on saying and doing things which antagonise the Russians, and frighten them more and more. And, if this still continues to be his principal role, it is hard to see how he can avoid coming into a military collision with the Russians sooner or later—even if he is really sincere in his protestation that he has no territorial designs at Russia's expense. My impression is that he has begun to realise the danger, here, of a disastrous smash, and that he is eager now to change his role and to appear as 'the good European' and 'the associate of England'—allowing his anti-Russian role to fall into the background. This would be an alternative way, for him, of getting the prestige and justification, on his home front, that he simply must have, in some form or other. If he can get it in a way that might lead to peace instead of to war, I believe he would be vastly relieved.

I therefore believe that any response from the English side to his overtures for our friendship would produce an enormous counter-response to us from Hitler.⁹

A. J. TOYNBEE

⁹ Professor Toynbee's story was received with some scepticism in the Foreign Office.

Comments by Mr. Wigram, Sir Robert Vansittart, and Mr. L. Collier (a Counsellor in the Foreign Office) were as follows. 'Both Mr. Toynbee and Mr. Ward Price [Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Mail*] suggest that much can be achieved by treating Herr Hitler with courtesy and be [by] "response from the English side to his overtures". Twice in the last 15 months we have made two separate series of the most obvious addresses to him. . . That of this autumn and winter ended in the reoccupation of the Rhineland. R. F. Wigram. 16/3.' 'We do our best. I hope and think we are *always* courteous. R. V. March 18.' 'Knowing Mr. Toynbee personally, I have great respect for his learning, but none for his judgment. L. C. March 25th.'

No. 57

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received March 10, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 142 Telegraphic [C 1595/4/18]

ROME, March 10, 1936, 4.15 a.m.

I found Signor Suvich distinctly disturbed at the extent to which France seemed to be committing herself with regard to the German action. Declaration that she would not negotiate as long as there were any German troops in the demilitarized zone, that she was taking certain military measures and general tone of statements by French Government and by the press all led him to feel that France was embarking on a somewhat dangerous course. He asked me if I had any news as to what my Government intended to do. I replied that up to now I had none but I believed that you were to make a statement.

2. I asked him in return if he could tell me what the Italian attitude was. Signor Suvich replied that he had given instructions to Signor [Cerruti] to attend the meeting of representatives of the Locarno Powers in Paris today but he was only to listen and report. Italy being a country under sanctions did not feel that it was possible for her to take any material action against Germany. I remarked that nevertheless Italy had never stated that she had withdrawn from her Locarno obligations because of sanctions. I could not think that such an Italian reply was very well founded and it certainly would not be satisfactory to the French. Signor Suvich contented himself with repeating that Italy was under sanctions and could not therefore take action and that this was at any rate some sort of reply. I said that if this was so we might equally reply that as Italy was not ready to fulfil her obligations we could claim to be to some extent released from our obligations. Signor Suvich observed that this was an even worse answer than that of Italy and I did not pursue the discussion which was purely personal and seemed to me to be becoming of a somewhat theoretical nature.

3. I should add that during this part of the discussion Signor Suvich remarked that it was being said that if sanctions were not applied to Germany which had violated a solemn treaty, those imposed on Italy because she had also violated certain treaties ought also to be withdrawn. I retorted that Germany had not committed an act of armed aggression against the

territory of another State; Italy had and this was the ground of her condemnation at Geneva.

4. Signor Suvich then asked me whether I knew whether France intended to request that economic sanctions should be applied against Germany. Of course Italy could not do this: because of existing sanctions she could not cut off one of her few remaining sources of trade. Nor did he think that Poland for instance could agree to the action suggested by the French Government. He was convinced that Germany would refuse to remove her troops from the Rhineland. Could France afford to fight Germany alone? Russia could hardly help. He was by no means certain that if there was a war between France and Germany, France would be victorious, nor was he convinced that French troops would be prepared to march for the cause in question. It would have been different of course if French territory had been attacked.

5. Signor Suvich said that he had had a visit from the Polish Ambassador¹ this morning who had remarked to him that if Germany succeeded in flouting her Locarno Treaty engagements, which had been freely entered into, then she would not hesitate to break other engagements when she thought the time ripe. For instance next year it might be Austria, the year after the Corridor. What would Great Britain do in such eventualities? I replied that I could not answer hypothetical questions of this kind but as he knew we were ready to carry out our obligations under the League of Nations; and it should be remembered that part of the German offer was to return to the League. I for one sincerely trusted that the result of this crisis might not be that Germany would remain in full possession of the demilitarized zone, and that the counter offers she had made would fall to the ground because of a French refusal to negotiate.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

¹ Dr. A. Wysocki.

No. 58

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received March 10, 11.24 a.m.)

No. 69 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1594/4/18]

BERLIN, March 10, 1936

Telegrams from London headlines and leaders all emphasise the portions of your speech¹ in which you expressed your intention of giving careful consideration to the Chancellor's proposals. In this respect English opinion is contrasted favourably with the unreasonable anger displayed by French politicians and newspapers.

Leading articles begin by using the old arguments to controvert your statement that Germany has unilaterally denounced the Locarno Treaty.

¹ i.e. Mr. Eden's statement of March 9; cf. No. 48, note 20.

Even on this point an attempt is made by the *D[eutsche] A[llgemeine] Z[ei]tung* to attenuate your remarks. It is noteworthy says the editorial that you did not use the words 'breach of a treaty' but 'unilateral denunciation'.

Naturally, he continues, even this watered down accusation is not justified since not Germany but France took the initiative etc., etc.

As regards the conclusions of your speech to which most attention is given the general tendency is to welcome the independence of the British Government from French influence and to express the opinion that English sense of realities will carry the day against legal pedantry. The present opportunity may be the last. Dr. Schmitt in the '*Völkischer Beobachter*' goes further and says that Great Britain appears to be taking account of the realities of European development which does not any more permit a military and juridical dictatorship of Paris over Europe. If you carry out your intention of examining objectively the German proposal there are hopes that the coming negotiations will result in a real alleviation of the European situation.

Repeated by telephone to Paris.

No. 59

Foreign Office to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 51 Telegraphic [C 1617/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 10, 1936, 1 p.m.*

Following from Sir R. Vansittart for Secretary of State.

From telegram received by Mr. Bruce¹ from his Government it appears that German Consul-General has requested Commonwealth Government to transmit German 'case' to President of the League Council. The Commonwealth Government were inclined to accede to the request but asked Mr. Bruce for his views. The latter, after consultation here, is telling his Government that he considers that there is no need for the German Government to use the Commonwealth Government as intermediary, and that they can address their case direct either to the Secretary-General (who has already invited the German Government to attend Friday's meeting) or else to the President.

The fact that the German Government intend to put in a 'case' will probably bring to the fore the question of arbitration. It would be as well therefore not to commit ourselves to any particular view on this latter point until we see what form the German 'case' takes. In this connexion please also see Lord Cecil's² comments in my immediately succeeding telegram.³

¹ High Commissioner for Australia in the United Kingdom, and President of the League Council for the 90th and 91st (Extraordinary) Sessions.

² President of the League of Nations Union.

³ Not printed. In conversation with Lord Cranborne, Parliamentary Under Secretary of

State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Cecil stated that in his opinion the League should refer the question of Germany's violation of Locarno to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague.

No. 60

Foreign Office to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 53 Telegraphic [C 1619/4/18]

Confidential

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 10, 1936, 3 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State.

Following from Sir R. Vansittart. I have heard from a good German official source that re-occupation of demilitarized zone was strongly opposed by the Reichswehr and Wilhelmstrasse, but insisted upon by Goebbels¹ and Göring, and eventually by Hitler, as necessary to offset the embarrassments of the internal situation. Wilhelmstrasse fears refusal to negotiate failing withdrawal, which would produce an acute internal crisis. Source adds that influence of more moderate circles—to which he belongs—will be seriously reduced if the *fait accompli* is simply accepted. In this connexion I notice that 'Times' Berlin correspondent concludes his article in today's issue with reference to necessity 'to handle situation in such a way as to strengthen the hands of the more moderate among Herr Hitler's advisers.'²

¹ Dr. J. Goebbels was German Minister of Propaganda.

² See *The Times*, March 10, 1936, p. 15.

No. 61

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Foreign Office (Received March 10, 4.50 p.m.)

No. 122 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1614/4/18]

Immediate

PARIS, March 10, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Following from Secretary of State.

After adjournment of formal meeting we thought it useful to suggest a meeting of Ministers only. Italy was represented by Italian Ambassador. At this meeting we asked M. Flandin what he thought German attitude would be if the course he envisaged of successive stages of action culminating in military action were followed.

Both M. Flandin and M. van Zeeland said they were confident that in such conditions Germany would yield. M. Flandin continued that in the view of French Government this was the best moment at which to accept German challenge. Position next year would be worse. Germany was with-

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarized the discussion between the representatives of the Locarno powers in Paris on March 10 of which a full record is printed in No. 63 below.

out friends. Poland would not help Germany. The Little Entente realised that its own future was at stake. Russia's support could be counted on. There only remained doubt about Italy and in her case it could be dealt with if it could be agreed that, irrespective of her negotiation of peace with Abyssinia, sanctions would be raised.

When we made it clear that in our view economic and financial sanctions against Germany could never be effective, French Ministers did not dissent. They emphasized their conviction that it would be no use entering upon this course unless we were prepared to see it through to a successful end.

Upon our expressing some surprise that French public opinion should be prepared to contemplate French military action against Germany in the Rhineland, French Ministers replied that French public of all sections, even the most pacifist, realised that everything was at stake. That view was supported by M. van Zeeland who said that there was one chance in ten of war; but he was so . . .² war would follow no action that he was prepared to take this one chance in ten. M. van Zeeland did not share view of French Ministers that complete evacuation of Rhineland by Germany was an essential preliminary to all negotiations. He was not clear, however, as to what intermediate course was possible, though he was plainly in favour of finding some middle course which would combine the maximum pressure on Germany with saving Herr Hitler's face with his own people.

M. van Zeeland emphasised that all depended on His Majesty's Government. Belgium would take any action if France and United Kingdom joined in.³

Repeated to Berlin, Brussels and Rome.

² The text was here uncertain.

³ Cf. *D.D.B.*, *op. cit.*, No. 43.

No. 62

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Foreign Office (Received March 10, 5.5 p.m.)

No. 123 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1615/4/18]

PARIS, March 10, 1936

Following from Secretary of State.

With reference to my telegrams Nos. 121¹ and 122² the position is so complex and so critical that we feel it impossible to proceed to Geneva without further consultations with our colleagues. We are also much impressed with the desirability of keeping proceedings during the next few days as closely as possible under British influence.

In the circumstances, we recommend that we should be authorised to propose the following procedure to other Locarno Powers.

1. That we return to London tonight and ask for postponement of Committee of Thirteen until middle of next week.

¹ See No. 61, note 1.

² No. 61.

2. That we invite Locarno Powers to come to London on Thursday evening.

3. That we invite Council of the League to meet in London next Monday.

M. van Zeeland indicated to us this morning his desire for a meeting of the Locarno Powers in London.

If Council of the League meets in London this will involve His Majesty's Government in some small additional expenditure.

We are convinced that best chance of resolving present situation is if negotiations can take place in London where contact with our colleagues can be continuously maintained. Contact with Germans will also have to be preserved during session of Council and it is clear that London will be better for this purpose than Geneva.

We should be grateful for immediate reply by telephone³ since Flandin and van Zeeland and Italian representative should be invited this evening.⁴

³ A note by Mr. Baxter of the Central Department on the file of this telegram read: 'Action taken by telephone. C. W. B. 11/3.'

⁴ A telegram to the Foreign Office from the Secretary General of the League of Nations, despatched at 11.45 p.m. on March 10, read as follows. 'Following telegram has been sent to Members Council. "British Representative Council has asked that extraordinary session be held London, Saturday, 14th March. Failing objections received by Secretary-General before 3 p.m. Wednesday, President Council will consider that in accordance Article 2 rules of procedure proposal of British Representative is accepted".' Mr. Eden and Lord Halifax returned to London on March 11: see No. 70, note 1, below.

No. 63

Record¹ of conversation between representatives of the Locarno Powers (Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Italy), held at the Quai d'Orsay on Tuesday, March 10, 1936, at 10.30 a.m.

[C 1673/4/18]*

PRESENT:

Great Britain

MR. EDEN, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

LORD HALIFAX, Lord Privy Seal

SIR G. CLERK, His Majesty's Ambassador in Paris

SIR W. MALKIN, Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office

MR. STRANG, Foreign Office

MR. WIGRAM, Foreign Office

¹ This Record, prepared in the Foreign Office, was later printed in Foreign Office Confidential Print. *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 380, note 1, says that no report of this meeting has been found in the French archives. For a Belgian account see *D.D.B., op. cit.*, No. 41.

France

M. P.-E. FLANDIN, Minister for Foreign Affairs
M. PAUL-BONCOUR, Minister of State
M. ALEXIS LÉGER, Secretary-General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
M. BARGETON, Political Director at Ministry for Foreign Affairs
M. RENÉ MASSIGLI, Assistant Political Director at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
M. BASDEVANT, Legal Adviser of Ministry for Foreign Affairs
M. ROCHAT, Private Secretary to M. Flandin
M. DE MENTHON, Secretary at Ministry for Foreign Affairs
M. DUMAINE, Translator

Belgium

M. VAN ZEELAND, President of the Council
COUNT DE KERCHOVE, Ambassador in Paris
M. VAN ZUYLEN, Political Director at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
VISCOUNT DE LANTSHEERE, Private Secretary to M. van Zeeland
BARON HERRY, Counsellor of the Belgian Embassy in Paris
M. MUULS, Legal Adviser of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
COUNT DE MEEUS, Secretary to M. van Zeeland

Italy

M. CERRUTI, Ambassador in Paris
MARQUIS TALAMO, Counsellor at the Italian Embassy in Paris
M. SCAMMACA, First Secretary at Italian Embassy in Paris

M. FLANDIN, after welcoming the representatives of the other Powers, said that in the present grave crisis it was suitable that a meeting of representatives of the Locarno Powers should be held in order that they might consult and concert together in anticipation of the meeting of the League Council, which will be held on Friday, the 13th March, at the request of the French and Belgian Governments.

The French Government had no intention of asking for any resolution to be voted at the present meeting. On the contrary, what was required was an intimate and frank exchange of views between all the Powers interested in the German violation of the Locarno Treaty, with a view to the adoption of a common position at Geneva.

M. Flandin asked whether the other delegations were in agreement with this programme.

MR. EDEN said that the proposed procedure seemed to him practical and satisfactory.

SIGNOR CERRUTI then read a declaration to the effect that, Italy being a State subject to sanctions, he could not agree in advance to any action of a political, economic or military character, in respect of which he would have to formulate every reserve. His instructions were to listen and report so that his Government might take the necessary decisions.

M. FLANDIN said that it would be normal if the French Government should at the outset state their point of view. As to events themselves, there could be no possible disagreement. There had been an effective reoccupation of the demilitarised zone, not by symbolic detachments, but in considerable force. What had taken place was a complete reoccupation. The French Government therefore considered that what had occurred was not merely an attempt at remilitarisation, but actual and complete remilitarisation. If statements in the German Chancellor's memorandum² and in his speech were recalled, it would be clear that Germany had re-established her full and entire sovereignty in the demilitarised zone. This meant that Germany probably intended to go on and construct fortifications, in regard to which there were separate stipulations in the treaties of peace.

It was true that the Chancellor had proposed the negotiation of a double demilitarised zone, but this proposal was purely fallacious. In face of the German menace, France had established a line of fortifications along the German frontier. His proposal amounted, in fact, to a proposal for the demolition of these fortifications.

M. Flandin went on to say that it was unnecessary to recount the history of the demilitarised zone. It was not merely upon the ground of its violation that the French Government took position. France had drawn attention in the past to many violations of the treaties of peace, but never to a violation so deliberate as the present one or a violation committed in such conditions.

When, at Stresa and at the Council in April 1935, the Powers had been faced by Germany's repudiation of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, this had followed long and complex debates at Geneva on the question of disarmament, and the German case was that the other Powers had not fulfilled their own pledges to disarm. Although France did not accept this thesis, there was perhaps some basis for it.

In the present case, however, not only was there no such basis, but what had been violated was a treaty into which Germany had freely entered. It was a violation of a territorial character, a violation following upon repeated assurances by the German Chancellor that he would respect the Locarno Treaty and the demilitarised zone on condition that the other parties did the same. It was a violation committed in the very middle of negotiations for a general settlement with Germany. M. Flandin here recalled the London Declaration of the 3rd February, 1935,³ which was followed by the Resolution of Stresa,⁴ and by the visits of British Ministers to Berlin.⁵ As lately as last November the British and French Ambassadors had visited Herr Hitler, and had asked him upon what basis negotiations should proceed.⁶ Finally, M. Flandin had, on the strength of a mere newspaper article, recording an interview with Herr Hitler, instructed the French

² See Enclosure in No. 42.

³ See Volume XII, Annex to No. 400.

⁴ See *ibid.*, No. 722.

⁵ See *ibid.*, No. 651.

⁶ See Volume XV, Nos. 241 and 383. Sir E. Phipps's interview with Herr Hitler took place on December 13, 1935.

Ambassador in Berlin to ask the German Chancellor to develop his intentions in greater detail.⁷

If such violations were tolerated by members of the League as a whole, and in particular by the Locarno Powers, there was no basis for the establishment of international order, and no chance for the organisation of peace through a system of collective security under the Covenant.

France would therefore ask the Council of the League to declare that there had been a breach of articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. As to the fact of this breach, there could be no possibility of doubt.

Once the breach had been declared by the Council, the French Government would put at the disposal of the Council all their moral and material resources (including military, naval and air forces) in order to repress what they regarded as an attempt upon international peace. The French Government expected that the Locarno Powers, in virtue of their formal obligations to render assistance, and the other members of the League, in virtue of the Council Resolution of the 17th April, 1935,⁸ would act with the French Government in exercising pressure upon the author of this action.

The French Government did not by this mean to indicate that they would refuse in the future to pursue negotiations with Germany on questions interesting Germany and the Locarno Powers; but that such negotiations would only be possible when international law had been re-established in its full value 'de bon gré ou de mauvais gré.'

M. VAN ZEELAND emphasised that Belgium was in a special position. The demilitarised zone was of the very first interest to Belgium. It was of greater moment to Belgium than to France in view of the greater proportionate length of her frontier. The risk created by the remilitarisation of the zone was therefore particularly grave.

In the second place Belgium had always fulfilled her international obligations with scrupulous care. So far as Belgium was concerned Germany had no pretext whatever for withdrawing from her obligations in that the Franco-Soviet Pact had nothing to do with Belgium. It was *res inter alios acta*.

Finally, in view of her relatively weak material sources Belgium depended more than did the Great Powers upon respect for international obligations.

Locarno was the whole basis of Belgium's international position. Although there had been a violation of that treaty by one party, the treaty continued to exist, and all the obligations assumed by the other signatories remained in force, and Belgium reserved her right to invoke them.

Finally, M. van Zeeland said that he had two points to make, one of law and the other of fact.

On the point of law, he said that under article 1 of the Locarno Treaty the high contracting parties collectively and severally guaranteed . . . the observance of the stipulations of articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles concerning the demilitarised zone. Belgium therefore turned towards her

⁷ See *ibid.*, No. 554.

⁸ Cf. No. 39, note 3.

co-signatories, and particularly to the guarantor Powers, and asked them to come to her aid.

On the point of fact, he said that it was essential that a common front should be established among the signatories of Locarno. If this was done it might be possible to arrive at a solution. If no common front were established, the worst catastrophes (and he used the words advisedly) were to be feared.

Belgium had decided to play her part without reserve in any collective action agreed upon by the co-signatories. He wished to know from the guarantor Powers how they intended to fulfil their obligations.

MR. EDEN said that he was glad to hear from M. Flandin that there was no intention to try to reach decisions at the present meeting. The time for these would be the meeting of the Council. The present would be a useful opportunity for a preliminary exchange of views.

So far as His Majesty's Government were concerned the position had been made clear in his statement in the House of Commons on the previous day.⁹ There was little of moment that he could add to that statement. He would, however, put some questions arising out of the statements that had just been made.

M. Flandin had said that there was to be no negotiation until international law had been re-established in its full value. What had the French Government in mind? Did this mean that there would be no negotiation until the zone had been evacuated, and, if so, how was it suggested that this result should be arrived at?

Secondly, M. Flandin had stated that France would place all her resources at the disposal of the League. Had the French Government in mind any particular course of action which they would propose that the Council should follow?

His Majesty's Government were clear that the action of the German Government could not be passed over in silence, and this had been stated in the House of Commons. But there was another aspect of the problem, touched on by M. van Zeeland, namely, the necessity to envisage the situation with a full consciousness of responsibility for the future of Europe. He would not disguise that, in the view of His Majesty's Government and of British public opinion, several opportunities of reaching an agreement with Germany had been missed. That was why he had said in the House of Commons that, while the action of Germany was to be condemned, there still remained the task of reconstruction.

The reason why he had put these questions was that he wished to be clear in his own mind what opportunities there were for reconstruction, and what was the view of his colleagues at that table as to the nature of the task which faced them at Geneva.

M. FLANDIN said that, before answering these questions, he wished to recall the juridical aspect of the question. He then read a paper in the following terms.

⁹ Cf. No. 48, note 20.

'The entry of German troops into the demilitarised Rhineland zone constitutes an infraction of article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles, the observance of which is guaranteed collectively and severally by the Powers signatory of the Treaty of Locarno by the terms of article 1 of that treaty.

According to article 4 (1) of the Treaty of Locarno, if one of the high contracting parties alleges that a violation of articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles has been or is being committed, it shall bring the question at once before the Council of the League of Nations. This action has just been taken by France and Belgium.

The function of the Council in such a case is to satisfy itself that such breach has been committed.

By the terms of article 4 (2), as soon as the Council is satisfied that such breach has been committed, it will notify its finding without delay to the signatory Powers, "who severally agree that in such case they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against whom the act complained of is directed."

Article 4 (1) and (2) deals in the same way with

(1) The violation of the obligation undertaken in article 2 by Germany and France and by Germany and Belgium that they will in no case attack or invade each other or resort to war against each other; and

(2) The breach by Germany of articles 42 and 43 regarding the demilitarised zone. In both cases the procedure is the same and the obligations of the guaranteeing Powers are the same.

In consequence, a breach of article 43 established by the Council is sufficient to bring into play the obligation of assistance on the part of the signatory Powers, and it is not necessary that this breach should be accompanied by an attack or an invasion; and in the case of such a breach the obligation of assistance is by the terms of article 4 (1) and (2) the same as in the case of an attack or of an invasion or of a resort to war.'

Mr. Eden had asked what the French Government understood by the re-establishment of international law. On this point there was no doubt—the evacuation of the demilitarised zone. In the view of the French Government such evacuation ought to be demanded and obtained; and if, in order to obtain it, a successive series of measures were required, they would include measures of an economic, financial and, if necessary, military character.

When evacuation had been secured, the French Government would hold that international law had been re-established and that all guarantees in international treaties would again have a value. Otherwise public opinion would rightly come to the conclusion that the most formal undertakings, even when repeatedly reaffirmed, had no more than a paper value. If Governments continued simply to incline themselves in the face of violations of this kind as they occurred, might would be right.

That was why the French Government had decided to take up the position which he had just stated. The question was whether the guarantees of peace

contained in the Covenant and other treaties were to be respected or were to disappear.

MR. EDEN was grateful to M. Flandin for answering his questions so fully and so frankly.

As he now understood the position, the French Government would not negotiate until international law had been re-established. They would not consider international law had been re-established until the evacuation of the zone had been demanded and secured. To secure such evacuation France, as a member of the Council, and in agreement with the other members of the Council, would use means of pressure of a financial, economic and, if necessary, military character. Was he to understand that M. Flandin had suggested that these measures would be taken by the Locarno Powers alone, or were they to be taken by the members of the League, or at least by the Council?

M. FLANDIN said that his object during the present preparatory meeting of the Locarno Powers was to secure unity of action. His own conviction, which was shared by M. van Zeeland, was that if the Locarno Powers were agreed in asking that such matters should be taken, it was very probable that the Powers represented on the Council would agree to recommend them to the other members of the League. On the other hand, if the Locarno Powers went to the Council divided, it was much less probable that the Council would enter so firmly upon the proposed measures.

His view was that the Powers who had special obligations under Locarno should take up a common position at the Council. In that event the Council would probably recommend progressive measures in order to secure evacuation. The Powers concerned would then have to concert as to those measures most likely to be adopted by the greatest possible number of members of the League.

MR. EDEN was not sure that the position of the other members of the League was so certain or so simple as M. Flandin supposed. Leaving the Locarno Powers aside for the moment, he would ask M. Flandin what obligation the other members of the League had to proceed to military action in the present case.

M. FLANDIN said that no doubt the obligation to render assistance, which was a formal obligation for the signatories of Locarno, was not so formal for the other members of the League. But action could be taken by the Council in virtue of their resolution of the 17th April, 1935, the operative part of which is as follows.

‘Considering that the unilateral repudiation of international obligations may endanger the very existence of the League of Nations as an organisation for maintaining peace and promoting security;

Decides:

That such repudiation, without prejudice to the application of the measures already provided in international agreement, should, in the event of its having relation to undertakings concerning the security of

peoples and the maintenance of peace in Europe, call into play all appropriate measures on the part of members of the League and within the framework of the Covenant;

Requests a committee composed of the representatives of France, Italy, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom, Spain, Poland, Netherlands, Hungary, Canada, Chile, Portugal, Turkey and Yugoslavia to propose for this purpose measures to render the Covenant more effective in the organisation of collective security, and to define in particular the economic and financial measures which might be applied, should in the future a State, whether a member of the League of Nations or not, endanger peace by the unilateral repudiation of its international obligations.’¹⁰

M. FLANDIN observed that this text had been unanimously adopted by the Council. The committee set up by the Council had, it was true, not concluded its labours, but in the meanwhile economic and financial measures had been organised and put into effect in another case.

Whatever difficulty there might be in the resolution related therefore to the organisation of sanctions and not to the principle of sanctions, which had been expressly recognised by the Council. It should be easier now for the Council, basing itself upon the April resolution, to make a recommendation to members of the League for financial and economic measures in the present case.

MR. EDEN was grateful to M. Flandin for recalling the terms of this resolution, but he observed that the resolution referred only to economic and financial measures, and not to military measures. The anxiety in his mind, which was still unrelieved, was that he could not see what obligation lay upon the members of the League, other than the Locarno Powers, to proceed to military measures.

M. FLANDIN replied that this was a juridical question which might have its interest, but it was only relatively important because there was a clear obligation to render military assistance resting upon the Locarno Powers themselves.

MR. EDEN asked whether the French Government contemplated that the Locarno Powers should take military measures alone.

M. FLANDIN replied: ‘Yes.’

(At this point the meeting was suspended at Mr. Eden’s request and a private consultation took place between Ministers, which has been separately reported.¹¹

It was decided to issue a *communiqué* to the press in the terms shown in the annex.)

ANNEX

In opening the meeting, M. Flandin welcomed the representatives of the signatory and guarantor Powers of Locarno, and made it clear that the

¹⁰ Cf. Volume XV, No. 8, note 6.

¹¹ See No. 61.

object of the meeting was to exchange information and to define the situation, but that no resolution would be proposed and no decision taken before the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations.

The procedure having been thus defined, the various delegations explained their points of view. This exchange of views will perhaps be continued in Paris this evening, and, in any case, at Geneva, where the delegates will meet again to-morrow.

No. 64

Sir R. Clive¹ (Tokyo) to Mr. Eden (Received March 11, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic [C 1644/4/18]

TOKYO, March 11, 1936, 11.25 a.m. [sic]

German military occupation of the Rhineland.

Japanese press as was to be expected is sympathetic to German attitude. Franco-Soviet treaty is unpopular here.

¹ H.M. Ambassador at Tokyo.

No. 65

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 11, 2.10 p.m.)

No. 74 Telegraphic [C 1670/4/18]

BERLIN, March 11, 1936, 2.15 p.m. [sic]

Paris telegram No. 122¹ to Foreign Office.

I do not share Monsieur van Zeeland's optimism that the chances of war would be only 1 in 10.

Germany is ruled by bold and determined adventurers. They are not parliamentary ministers who can resign when faced with formidable opposition or grave risks. They can neither resign nor leave this country without risking their lives or freedom. If as a consequence of sanctions or similar measures the water rises to Herr Hitler's neck he, like General Göring and Doctor Goebbels, will take the plunge into war rather than submit tamely to be drowned.

German public opinion would support Herr Hitler in such a contingency for it is fully aware that Locarno was not really a freely negotiated treaty between Germany and other Locarno partners despite the Chancellor's public assurances that it was. So long as French troops were in the Rhineland such a treaty in German eyes must have been signed under duress and with a view to inducing the French to leave the Rhineland.

Repeated to Paris, Rome and Brussels.

¹ No. 61.

No. 66

Sir R. Campbell¹ (Belgrade) to Mr. Eden (Received March 11, 9.30 p.m.)
No. 34 Telegraphic [C 1699/4/18]

BELGRADE, March 11, 1936, 8.20 p.m.

Violation of demilitarized zone.

President of Council tells me that Yugoslav Government intend to lie low and play the modest part of a small Power. They are of course heart and soul in favour of a peaceful solution and particularly afraid of any move towards application of economic sanctions against Germany as the country could not support loss of trade with its second best as well as with its best customer.

I think my French colleague must have sounded the President of the Council as to the Yugoslav attitude towards sanctions but I could not ascertain this for certain.² M. Stoyadinovitch told me however that if France were the victim of an unprovoked aggression Yugoslavia would stand by her. In no other respect is he prepared to commit himself but from general trend of his and of Prince Regent's remarks to me I think Yugoslav Government will support, quietly behind the scenes, any policy adopted by His Majesty's Government aiming at an agreed solution.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Prague and Bucharest.

¹ H.M. Minister at Belgrade.

² A telegram of March 10 from the French Minister, M. de Dampierre, printed in *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 360, confirms this view.

No. 67

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 11, 9.50 p.m.)
No. 77 Telegraphic [C 1682/4/18]

BERLIN, March 11, 1936, 8.48 p.m.

My telegram No. 73.¹

Military Attaché was informed confidentially today that no troops have been moved into the remilitarized zone since March 8th. He has no reason to doubt the truth of this.

He reports that there is great activity at the Ministry of War and regards it as certain that plans are being completed.

Following is his appreciation of the present state of German army for defence.

Although German army is far below the standard that it will reach in the course of the next few years both in equipment and training it could

¹ Not printed: it reported on the morning of March 11 a further German General Staff statement that it would be impossible to withdraw German troops from the Rhineland.

nevertheless I believe offer a very determined resistance to any troops attempting to invade Germany particularly if such invasion were being carried on on one front only.

Notwithstanding that troops now serving largely consist of men called to the colours in November 1935 they possessed training valuable from a military point of view before they were called up and have this year been trained very hard throughout the winter.

Capacity of present German troops for mobile warfare is not yet of the highest; they could nevertheless offer great resistance in a defensive rôle.

The problem of the defence of Rhineland by means other than by regular troops has been studied by the Germans for many years and the frontier guards are prepared to make demolitions and to resist an invasion.

No. 68

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 11, 10.40 p.m.)

No. 78 Telegraphic [C 1710/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, March 11, 1936, 9.54 p.m.

Mr. Ward Price had a lengthy interview with the Chancellor in Bavaria on Monday, March 9th. Account in the 'Daily Mail' of today contains only a fragment of his long conversation.

Only question which the Chancellor refused to discuss was that of fortifying or not fortifying newly occupied territory: he could not discuss with a foreigner what he could do on German soil.

Mr. Ward Price's impression was that Herr Hitler was genuinely anxious at the moment to come to a definite settlement but that like all pathological cases he could persuade himself within a short time that the other side was not keeping the bargain and that Germany was therefore entitled to take the initiative afresh.

The Chancellor was throughout in a state of highly emotional exaltation. His eyes blazed with fanaticism. He knew, he said, that he might be faced with an order to withdraw his troops. This he would never do. The nervous strain was tremendous but he had withstood thirty and forty hours of shell fire at a time before the British line and he would be able to withstand any strain for Germany's sake. The men about him had nerves of steel. They knew what they were doing and nothing would deter them. Let France attack him he would defend himself but he would never take the offensive.

He derided the idea that sanctions could hurt him. They had even failed against Italy. Modern war could only last six months. He would destroy commerce on [*sic*] any States bordering on Germany if they joined a sanctions movement.

Mr. Ward Price rebuked him pointing out that he had put the British Government into a most unspeakable quandary. Sanctions decision at

Stresa of April 17th, 1935,¹ the subsequent imposition of sanctions against Signor Mussolini and Britain's position under Locarno and the League made it almost impossible for His Majesty's Government to accept Germany's offer or to refuse help to France. Herr Hitler intimated that he had no choice in the matter as all his previous offers to France and England had been rejected out of hand.

Mr. Ward Price is most anxious that his name should not be quoted.²

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Brussels.

¹ See Volume XII, No. 722.

² In minutes on this telegram Mr. Wigram remarked: 'I have pointed out to the News Dept. that it is not so certain if Herr Hitler ever withstood "30 and 40 hours shell fire"'. R. F. W. 13/3.' Mr. Sargent thought that 'some attempt should be made to answer Hitler's assertion that "all his previous offers to France and England have been rejected out of hand." The Secretary of State, in his statement in the House [cf. No. 48, note 20] showed that we were trying to start negotiations with Germany on the eve of Hitler's *coup de force*, but I do not think the fact has been sufficiently brought out that ever since Hitler's speech of last May we have been trying to start such negotiations on the basis of the offers he then made, and that the last attempts of ourselves and the French in December [1935] were both turned down by Hitler . . . O. G. Sargent. March 13th, 1936.' He thought it might be useful to prepare a White Paper showing what had been done. Sir R. Vansittart agreed on March 13 to consult Mr. Eden about this suggestion.

No. 69

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 21 Telegraphic [C 1672/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 11, 1936, 10.15 p.m.*

After the Conference in Paris on March 10th¹ I had a conversation alone with Belgian Prime Minister at his request.² I told him that Belgium and the United Kingdom seemed now to be faced with the problem of finding a middle course between British and French standpoints. We would have preferred to make clear to the world by the condemnation of the League Council how real was the disapproval of Germany's action in tearing up the Locarno Treaty, and then to proceed in a constructive spirit to seek to re-establish European peace by utilising Herr Hitler's offer together with such additions and alterations as might be practicable. French Government on the other hand had asked that Germany should first be compelled to withdraw from the Rhineland and that there should be no negotiations until international law had been thus re-established. I asked whether, as position was so serious, Prime Minister had any proposal which might contribute to reconcile the two points of view.

M. van Zeeland replied that he agreed as to seriousness of the situation. We had to avoid asking either Germany or France to accept a position

¹ Cf. No. 63.

² For M. van Zeeland's account of this conversation see *D.D.B., op. cit.*, No. 44.

which their previous attitude might make unacceptable to them. We must not therefore ask Germany to withdraw her troops from the Rhineland, nor merely ask France to negotiate in the face of that violation of Locarno. United Kingdom should determine in advance the basis for a negotiation. He suggested that the framework of this preliminary basis of negotiation should contain at least five elements. Firstly a condemnation of Germany's methods which would blame not the reoccupation of the Rhineland but the violation of a Treaty. This could be done while admitting that demilitarized zone could not be regarded as a permanent factor in European politics. Secondly, the number of German troops in occupation should be limited, such troops being maintained at stated points only, thus rendering occupation in fact symbolic in accordance with Herr Hitler's original undertaking. Thirdly, the other clauses affecting the demilitarized zone should remain in force and more particularly German Government should undertake not to fortify zone during negotiations. Fourthly, we should take note of German offers in order to ensure that they were not withdrawn. M. van Zeeland appreciated danger of Herr Hitler using the pretext of a delay in negotiation or of a possible condemnation by the Council for withdrawing some or all of his proposals. Fifthly, an effort should be made to find some additional guarantees to replace the lost security entailed by disappearance of the demilitarized zone.

On being asked to elaborate the last proposal Prime Minister enquired whether it would be possible for His Majesty's Government to state clearly that Locarno would stand regardless of Germany's repudiation. I pointed out that the essence of Locarno was its mutuality, and if Germany denounced the Treaty and we maintained that it nevertheless remained in force, then we should in fact be agreeing to a permanent Anglo-Franco-Belgian alliance. Prime Minister maintained that Germany's unilateral repudiation did not absolve other parties to the Treaty. He suggested that position might be fully met if in the negotiation of the non-aggression pacts suggested by Herr Hitler, His Majesty's Government would present their own obligation more precisely and in a manner which would appeal more to the public opinion of the countries concerned. For instance, could it not be said categorically that the intrusion of German troops upon French or Belgian soil would automatically involve counter action by British forces?

Prime Minister added that if His Majesty's Government were prepared on their own initiative to suggest some such basis for negotiation, it would be essential for them to make it clear to Germany that if that country did not accept the basis then His Majesty's Government, being bound by Locarno, would be compelled to follow her fellow signatories in any action that they might take. If this attempt at conciliation was to succeed it must be supported by firm policy on our part. The key to the whole position was in London and much would be gained if future conversations could take place in London. If we could combine firmness with an attempt at conciliation we might be able to secure a European settlement which would last for a generation.

Prime Minister then spoke of the state of French opinion. He thought

that the French people, and this applied to Belgium also, realized that if the present challenge were not taken up then perhaps in two years time they would be confronted with a more serious challenge involving almost certainly invasion of their territories in far less favourable conditions. Neither the French nor the Belgian people believed that the risk of war was other than remote, but if Germany were now allowed without hindrance to reap the full reward of her violation of a Treaty which she had freely signed, they believed war would be virtually inevitable in the near future.

Both Belgian Prime Minister and French Ministers stated that they had reliable information that Herr Hitler had acted at the instigation of General Goering and Herr Goebbels and against the advice of the Reichswehr and of Dr. Schacht.³ This may be influencing their attitude.⁴

Repeated to Berlin No. 42, Paris No. 55, Rome No. 65.

³ President of the *Reichsbank* and Acting Minister of Economics.

⁴ Cf. Nos. 52 and 60.

CHAPTER II

Meetings in London of the Locarno Powers and the League Council: Mr. Eden's statement of March 19 March 12-25, 1936

(No. 70)

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 43 Telegraphic [C 1671/4/18]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1936, 1.30 p.m.*

I sent for German Ambassador after Cabinet meeting in the evening of March 11th¹ and told him that I could scarcely exaggerate to him the gravity of the view which His Majesty's Government now took of the situation which had arisen. I referred to the position in which German Government had placed us in view of our Locarno obligations, and to position of Belgium which had signed no Pact with Russia and on whose frontier lay the greater part of the Demilitarized Zone. Locarno Powers were meeting in London on March 12th and we felt justified in asking Herr Hitler urgently for spontaneous contribution which would assist us in our object of securing a settlement. German Government might say this: 'We have said we want negotiation of new pacts because we want to create a new basis of peace in Europe. We meant what we said. To prove that we meant

¹ Mr. Eden and Lord Halifax were detained by fog on their return to London from Paris on March 11; they reached London shortly after 5 p.m. The normal weekly meeting of the Cabinet had taken place that morning, but Mr. Baldwin had called a special meeting for 6 p.m. that day. At this meeting Mr. Eden gave an account of the conversations with the French, Belgian, and Italian representatives in Paris on the previous day (see No. 63) and said that he and Lord Halifax had been surprised at the identity of French and Belgian views; they 'had soon discovered that our policy of condemning the German action and then developing a constructive policy to re-establish the European situation had no chance of acceptance'. They believed nevertheless that 'our policy of trying for a negotiation was still the right one' and that 'The alternative proposed by the French Government for forcing the Germans out of the Rhineland would not produce a satisfactory settlement'. In the course of the discussion which followed Mr. Baldwin 'thought that at some stage it would be necessary to point out to the French that the action they proposed would not result only in letting loose another great war in Europe. They might succeed in crushing Germany with the aid of Russia, but it would probably only result in Germany going Bolshevik.' Lord Halifax said their reply would be that if they did not act now there would only be a war under much more adverse conditions in three years' time. The Cabinet agreed that Mr. Eden should put to the German Ambassador the suggestion which is described in the present telegram.

it, we will withdraw all but a symbolic number of troops from the Zone, and will not increase that number, and will undertake not to fortify the Zone at least for the period necessary for the negotiation of the pacts and for the regularization of the international situation'. If German Government made such a spontaneous gesture we would do our utmost to get negotiations started. If German Government could take action, they must act quickly, if possible on March 12th, and from every point of view it would be an advantage to carry it through generously and well.

Further discussion covered question of number of troops to be maintained in the Zone and it was suggested² that with a figure of 10,000 it might be possible to maintain that occupation was only symbolic. Some additional reassurance might, it was thought, be given by statement that during negotiations the German troops would in no circumstances go nearer than a given distance from the French or Belgian frontiers.

I urged desirability of our receiving some reply before Locarno Powers met in late afternoon of March 12th.³

Repeated to Paris No. 56, Brussels No. 22, and Rome No. 66.

² Another account of this conversation shows that this proposal was made by Mr. Eden. Dr. von Hoesch had said that it would be difficult for the German Government to withdraw troops from the zone at this time, but he thought the figure was small—some 20,000 for the whole zone—and he understood that none of the troops was within 8 kilometres of the French frontier. Dr. von Hoesch also saw difficulty in limiting the offer to the 'period of negotiation' and suggested that Germany should undertake to refrain from further action for six months; Mr. Eden thought a time limit would not sound well, but that the actual form of the offer was clearly Germany's own responsibility.

³ *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 81, gives the German Ambassador's account of this conversation. No evidence has been found in the Foreign Office archives to support the account by the German journalist Dr. Fritz Hesse (*Das Spiel um Deutschland*, Munich, 1953, pp. 60–1) of an intervention by H.M. King Edward VIII in the Rhineland crisis at about this time. According to this story the King told Dr. von Hoesch on the telephone that he had warned Mr. Baldwin that he would abdicate if Mr. Baldwin made war against Germany. Although the story seems highly improbable (if only, among other things, because of the Cabinet's decision from the beginning of the crisis not to support military action) it may have been genuinely believed by German journalists in London. Thus *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 147, refers to a telephone message of March 18 to his newspaper from Dr. von Stuttenheim, London correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, reporting that the King was taking an 'extraordinarily active part in the whole affair' and 'won't hear of there being a danger of war'.

No. 71

*Mr. Eden to Viscount Chilston*¹ (Moscow)

No. 17 Telegraphic [C 1716/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1936, 3.50 p.m.*

Soviet Ambassador has had two interviews with Lord Cranborne on March 9 and March 10.

¹ H.M. Ambassador at Moscow.

After some preliminary observations respecting Herr Hitler's seven points² Ambassador (who said he was speaking unofficially) referred to Germany's return to the League. Soviet Government were not opposed to it in principle, but this did not mean that right plan was to let Germany return now. We should make ourselves strong first. Soviet Government had pursued this policy vis-à-vis Japan and they could now afford to fight a war both on the West and on the East without ill effects. Why should not England, France and Russia get together and strengthen their armaments and then when they were impregnable ask Germany to return? Lord Cranborne said that it was the policy of His Majesty's Government to strengthen the forces of collective security but that it did not seem to matter whether strengthening took place before or after Germany became a member of the League. To this the Ambassador demurred but he did not produce any counter argument.

During the interview on March 10 M. Maisky (who had then received instructions from his Government) stated that they took the gravest view of Germany's action. It was the last in a long chain of actions which could only end, if not stopped, in the complete destruction of the League and collective security. Soviet Government felt that German action could not be condoned and they were ready to take part in any action decided upon by the League. They considered that to negotiate or even to make enquiries of Germany at present would be to strike at roots of the League.

Lord Cranborne replied that nobody wished to condone Germany's action. There was, however, some difference between remilitarisation of German territory and violation of the territory of a neighbouring State. Ambassador replied that the Soviet Government were concerned merely with general principle of the sanctity of treaties.

He feared that British support of the League in this dispute was not so whole-hearted as might have been hoped. Lord Cranborne said he did not think anyone could criticise Britain in this respect. Britain, less than any country, was to be blamed if League action in the Abyssinian dispute was less effective than it might have been. Like Soviet Russia, she had always been in favour of the firmest action on which collective agreement could be obtained. His Majesty's Government must, however, consider what action at this moment was most likely to secure the peace of Western Europe. That seemed to entail at least an enquiry into German proposals though at present there was no question of negotiations.

Repeated to Paris No. 57 and Berlin No. 44.

² Cf. Enclosure in No. 42.

No. 72

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 12, 4.45 p.m.)

No. 80 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1730/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, March 12, 1936

A very long *communiqué* has been issued by German official news agency to the effect that the German Government, pending negotiations on their offer, will undertake not to increase present Rhineland garrisons amounting to nineteen battalions.

Translation follows as soon as possible.¹

¹ The full text of the *communiqué* was sent to London in telegram No. 82 of March 12 from Berlin, received at 5.45 p.m. and not printed here. Cf. No. 73 below, and No. 74, note 3, below.

No. 73

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 12, 4.55 p.m.)

No. 81 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1731/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, March 12, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Condition is laid down by German Government that French and Belgian Governments should also undertake not to make any change in the strength of their troops on the frontier.

¹ No. 72.

No. 74

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 48 Telegraphic [C 1813/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 12, 1936, 10.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 43.¹

German Ambassador communicated to me this afternoon document (of which text is contained in my immediately following telegram)² in reply to my communication made to him last night, see my telegram No. 43.

I told him that I was considerably disappointed with this reply. It really amounted to this: that the German Government had sent troops into the Rhineland and would not increase their number or alter their geographical position. On the other hand, in many quarters the position

¹ No. 70.

² No. 49 of March 12, not printed here. The substance of this document is given in *D.G.F.P., op. cit.*, No. 84.

was being taken that the German troops should be withdrawn from the Rhineland, and what I had proposed to the German Government on March 11th was in the nature of a compromise, that is that the German troops should not be entirely withdrawn but that they should be reduced. The German Government in substance replied that they would not be reduced but that they would not be augmented. The essence of a compromise was therefore lacking in the German reply. Moreover, one most important point in this proposal, the point regarding fortifications, was not mentioned at all in the German reply, although it was probably covered negatively and by implication in the first paragraph of the German document.

I could not conceal from the German Ambassador that with this material only in hand we should not get much further in the vital conversations which now lay immediately before us.

The Ambassador affirmed repeatedly that this offer of the German Chancellor, which he described as spontaneous, was in fact a real contribution, and I maintained no less steadfastly that though the document might contain a contribution, it was not a sufficient one to enable progress to be made.

The Lord Privy Seal and Sir Robert Vansittart who were present at intervals during the conversation, spontaneously and without any communication between themselves arrived immediately at the same conclusion. The significance of this fact was then impressed upon the German Ambassador, and he was asked to report it to his Government.

In undertaking to do so, the Ambassador repeated his conviction that he would obtain nothing further from them, although I pressed him repeatedly on the important point of fortifications.³

Repeated to: Paris No. 59. Rome No. 68. Brussels No. 23. Moscow No. 18. Warsaw No. 19. Prague No. 24. Belgrade No. 27. Bucharest No. 31. Constantinople No. 7. The Hague No. 4. Washington No. 75.

³ A record of this conversation by Sir R. Vansittart shows that a discussion took place as to whether Mr. Eden should report 'to the impending meeting an hour later of the other Locarno Powers the terms of his suggestion to the German Government and the nature of the reply'. Dr. von Hoesch preferred this immediate action; the British representatives thought it better to wait and see whether the German Government would improve its contribution, and not to publish the existing German document in the meantime. But scarcely had Dr. von Hoesch left the Foreign Office when a telegram from Berlin (No. 72; cf. No. 73) showed that the German Government had itself published its offer. Accordingly it was decided that the Foreign Office should publish the German document. It appeared in *The Times* of March 13 (p. 14), with details of the accompanying diplomatic negotiations. The German Government also issued a lengthy justification of its action in the Rhineland: the full text of this is printed in *The Times* of March 13, p. 13. Cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 85.

No. 75

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 61¹ Telegraphic [C 1815/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1936, 11 p.m.*

Short formal conversation took place this afternoon at the Foreign Office between the representatives of the four Locarno Powers.

I reminded the meeting that in Paris M. Flandin had said that France would ask Council to declare that there had been a breach of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. I said that His Majesty's Government agreed that the Council should do this and I added, without prejudice to the opinion which the Council might reach, that the view of His Majesty's Government was that the breach of Articles 42 and 43 was evident. Immediate problem was how best to handle the questions raised, and I proposed an immediate informal discussion between the Ministers representing the four Powers.

The only other noteworthy point in the discussion was a statement by Italian Ambassador that his government had no doubt that a breach of the Locarno Treaty had occurred. The Ambassador added that the points made by the French and Belgian representatives at Paris meeting were convincing. The obligations of the guarantor Powers were clearly defined in the Locarno Treaty and there was no doubt that they ought to be fully discharged. Italy stood by her obligations; but it was unfortunate that at this grave moment the policy adopted at Geneva should have placed Italy in a position which made it difficult for her to take any definite step so long as the present conditions remained.

Repeated to: Moscow No. 20, Warsaw No. 21, Prague No. 26, Bucharest No. 33, Belgrade No. 29, The Hague No. 6, Constantinople No. 9, Washington No. 77.

¹ No. 50 to Berlin, No. 70 to Rome, No. 25 to Brussels.

No. 76

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 13, 10.30 a.m.)

No. 50 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1995/4/18]

BERLIN, *March 12, 1936*

My telegram No. 51 of 6th March.¹

I learn from the same source that Hitler was at first disposed to exploit Italy's entanglement by engineering a 'coup' in Austria and establishing a parallel Nazi Government there. The Army Chiefs objected resolutely. The Army, they said, would not fight on Austrian soil with the same enthusiasm as on German soil in the Rhineland. In the demilitarised zone

¹ No. 27.

they would repel any attack. In Austria they would feel to some extent interlopers. This was one of the decisive factors in Hitler's choice.

No. 77

Minute by Mr. R. Dunbar¹

[C 1845/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1936*

Mr. Wiseman, Dominions Office, tells me that the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa² is receiving from the Union Government a message which 'urges the United Kingdom Government to make a courageous stand, and states that the Union Government fully supports the United Kingdom Government in its strong attempt to arrive at a pacific solution of the problem.'

No doubt the full text of the message will reach us in due course, but it is perhaps as well to submit this advance indication of its contents from Mr. Wiseman.

¹ A First Secretary in the Dominions Intelligence Section of the Treaty Department of the Foreign Office.

² Mr. C. de Water.

No. 78

Memorandum by Mr. Wigram on a conversation with M. Flandin

[C 1940/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1936*

I saw M. Flandin this morning¹ and I asked him how he expected the meeting to proceed this afternoon.

He said that he had fully explained the French position in Paris.² He had now no more to say. It was for the British Government to state its point of view on the French position.

After some further talk he said that of course he entirely realised the delicacy of the whole position; though it was not for him in London to take the initiative in a matter of this kind, he wondered whether the fewer the participants in the conversation the better. He was not merely thinking, in saying this, of confining the conversation to Ministers; but he was wonder-

¹ It is stated in *The Times* of March 13, 1936 (p. 14) that M. Flandin spent the morning of March 12 'in paying and receiving private calls. He was in consultation with Mr. Baldwin at Downing Street for half an hour.' This is probably the interview with Mr. Baldwin recorded without a date in M. Flandin's memoirs, *Politique Française 1919-1940* (Paris, 1947), pp. 207-8. No account of this conversation has been found in the Foreign Office archives.

² Cf. No. 63.

ing whether a series of private conversations would not be useful. I gathered that he found Italian participation a little embarrassing; and it seemed to me that he was even thinking of a private Anglo-French and then of an Anglo-Belgian conversation; but between Ministers only.

We then spoke about the Pertinax³ article of yesterday suggesting the reduction of the occupation to symbolic proportions and of the French Government *démenti*. He asked if we correctly understood the French position in this matter. There was no question of French security being immediately at stake. What was at stake was the future and the principle of the sanctity of treaties. This was why Pertinax had gone wrong in proposing reduction of the occupation to symbolic proportions. The maintenance of a symbolic occupation seemed to suggest that Germany had the right to reoccupy by unilateral acts.

No doubt it would be asking Hitler a great deal to ask him point blank completely to evacuate. He wondered, however, whether something could not be done by the following means.

The Franco-Russian Treaty would be ratified by the Senate to-day.⁴ Then he would at once formally propose the reference to The Hague Court of the question of its validity with Locarno. In the case of a dispute of this kind it was the practice of The Hague Court to take 'mesures conservatoires'. Could not The Hague Court ask the German Government as one of these measures to evacuate completely during the Court's proceedings which need not be long drawn out?

He then spoke again of the vital importance for France of maintaining the sanctity of Treaties. It was not a question of her immediate security, he repeated. After international law had been vindicated, the Germans could come back into the demilitarised zone. He did not say on this occasion, though he did tell me in Paris, that there would even for the future have, however, to be certain restrictions.

He added what I see is reported by the Paris Embassy this morning in the attached letter⁵ that pressure was being put upon the French Government by the Little Entente to insist on the vindication of international law.

M. Flandin reminded me that on a number of occasions in the past he had given me warning of the attitude to be taken up by the French Government; that he had never given me wrong information and he repeated several times that the vindication of international law was required and that it was no use reducing the occupation to symbolic proportions in which he pointed out to me that the Germans had falsely pretended that it had been affected [*sic*].

From what M. Flandin said, it seemed to follow that additional guarantees

³ 'Pertinax' was the pseudonym of M. André Géraud, a French political journalist.

⁴ Cf. No. 22.

⁵ Not printed. This letter of March 11 from Mr. V. Perowne, First Secretary in H.M. Embassy at Paris, to Mr. Wigram reported information from press sources that the Little Entente were meditating threatening to leave the League if no action were taken against Germany.

by us for the period of the negotiations in respect of French and Belgian security will not help very much. I do not feel able as yet to form an opinion as to whether or not such guarantees if given in respect of the more permanent future would be of assistance. One would have thought that that would be so; but the point is not at [as] yet at all clear.

I did not mention the communication to the German Ambassador last night,⁶ but I rather had the impression that M. Flandin is not altogether in ignorance of what passed. But he did not say anything definite. It seems to me that it is desirable that the position should be privately and confidentially explained to him by the Secretary of State with the least possible delay, preferably at lunch.⁷

R. F. WIGRAM

⁶ See No. 70.

⁷ It would appear that a hastily typed copy of this memorandum reached Sir R. Vansittart in time for him to forward it with a covering note to Mr. Eden before or during a cabinet meeting on the morning of March 12. The following remarks appear in a minute in Sir R. Vansittart's handwriting filed with the memorandum. 'Secretary of State. You shd. have this during the Cabinet, though it may be rather long for you to read & think about there. In any case I want to talk to you about it, before you come to any conclusions. I do not in fact take this as any last word. I think M. Flandin will be movable by suasion, but we shall probably have to think of some extra inducement. We must not take this as more than an initial attitude . . . R. V. March 11.' (This date was evidently written in error for 'March 12'.) The cabinet agreed with Mr. Eden's suggestion that in view of the leakage of information concerning his discussion with the German Ambassador on the previous evening he should inform the French ministers about this discussion. He then mentioned a proposal brought to London 'some time ago' by M. Hymans, Belgian Minister without Portfolio, to *préciser* Locarno by ensuring that 'in the event of an actual invasion of France or Belgium we should be brought in automatically'. Mr. Baldwin 'thought that that would involve a dangerous commitment, especially when air action was considered, and that no commitment ought to be taken'. There followed a general discussion 'on the points likely to be raised by French Ministers and the kind of reply that might be given but no decisions were asked for or given on this subject'.

No. 79

Letter from Mr. Law to Mr. Sargent

[C 1938/4/18]

March 12, 1936

My dear Moley,

I think I can now modify a little the gloomy picture of the sentiments of the City which I gave you on March 9th.¹ I find that up to date about 50% of the City have altered their view. Of these some 30% are now anti-German but still anti-French, and some 20% are anti-German, non-committal about France and pro-English. The 30% group now admit Germany's gross breach of faith and concede that she cannot be trusted in

¹ Cf. No. 55.

the future, but they add that nobody can be trusted and that therefore it is of no use to make treaties with anyone. The 20% think that Germany should be requested to make at least a 'symbolical' withdrawal from the Rhine Zone, and that if she refuses we should be forced to acquiesce reluctantly to a French demand for the application of sanctions. They are however doubtful of the efficacy of sanctions. Most of the 50% admit that Germany has muddled the whole affair, that internal dissensions and economic difficulties are serious and that in any case they are in no condition to fight now.

Among those who think that Germany's action is at all events partially justified, I find our naval treaty with Germany quoted to prove that we also have broken a treaty (i.e. the Treaty of Versailles) and that France has done the same by not adhering to the spirit of the preamble to the disarmament clauses of the same treaty.

I am however more hopeful of the state of opinion here. There is a general realization of the seriousness of the situation and this has been reflected in a more marked fall in the gilt-edged market. Speeches like those delivered yesterday in the country by Austen Chamberlain and Eustace Percy² are very helpful. There should be more of them. I do not think enough play has been made of the curious fact that Germany, while excusing herself from breaking the Locarno Treaty on the ground of its incompatibility with the Soviet Pact, has not demanded the denunciation by France of that Pact as a prerequisite to the negotiating of a new Locarno. If the Government will give the House of Commons a lead, the City and, I presume, the country will follow in time in spite of the efforts of the press to drive a wedge between ourselves and France.

If it comes to sanctions one thing however must be borne in mind. The City still believes that the £33 million of the German Standstill debt will one day be repaid and the balance sheets of the banks and acceptance houses are drawn up on this assumption. In the event of the imposition of sanctions Germany would probably repudiate this debt—or at least refuse to pay the interest on it and on the Dawes and Young Loans held here. This would cause serious embarrassment in the City, and the price of the City's acquiescence—if that matters—would be that the Government should offer some guarantee of eventual repayment of these sums. From the City's point of view the game would be well worth the candle.³

Yours ever,
NIGEL

² See *The Times*, March 12, 1936, p. 8, for reports of both these speeches.

³ Sir R. Vansittart wrote that Mr. Law should be especially thanked for giving the Foreign Office 'these valuable accounts at critical times. Whenever I am tempted toward optimism in regard to human wisdom, a little synopsis of City opinion has a markedly stabilising effect. R. V. March 13.'

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Sir R. Vansittart (Received March 14)
[C 1831/4/18]

Secret

BERLIN, March 12, 1936

My dear Van,

Here is a copy of a letter than [? that] I am sending to Hankey¹ by to-day's bag.

Sans commentaire!

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 80

Secret

BERLIN, March 12, 1936

My dear Maurice,

Lord Riverdale² (Arthur Balfour) was here for some days last week, ostensibly to give a lecture before a lot of industrial, economic and financial big-wigs. He was entertained by Schacht, Trendelenburg, Thyssen, Schnee, Ribbentrop,³ etc. Neurath went to one of the meals given for him.

The real reason for his visit, as you of course must know, was to investigate certain offers made by the Germans to sell us arms, munitions, etc. Riverdale told me that these offers he would not accept, for obvious reasons. He contemplates, however, accepting offers of *plant* to make shells, etc. This plant he found infinitely better than any existing in England. Of course this may merely mean the Germans want devisen, but I pointed out to him that if the Germans offered such plant to us it might also mean that they had something a great deal better that they kept to themselves.

In any case it gives one to think when one sees the Germans on the one hand, who have all these implements of war to sell, even to potential enemies, whereas on the other the world is told by Winterton in the House of Commons that poor old Fisher⁴ had only half an hour's ammunition to fire off at our former traditional friends, the Italians!⁵ If we play this game with *my* Tiger down the street he will show less patience than the Duce!

All this would seem to show that we have not got *very* much more time to lose before arming to the teeth, but perhaps I am a panic-monger!

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

¹ Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the Cabinet.

² Managing Director of Arthur Balfour & Co. Ltd.

³ Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary on Special Mission.

⁴ i.e. Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher, commander in chief of naval forces in the Mediterranean since 1932.

⁵ The reference is to the debate of March 9 on the White Paper on Defence (Cmd. 5107); see 309 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 1911.

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Sir R. Vansittart

[C 1995/4/18]

BERLIN, March 12, 1936

My dear Van,

A few lines to complete the picture given in my recent telegrams. As you know, I have always felt that Hitler was bound, sooner or later, to exploit the situation which had arisen at Geneva (see my telegram No. 43 of February 29th¹). England and Italy, the two policemen stationed outside the 'Locarno Arms' to see that France and Germany keep the peace, proceed to pass the time by quarrelling themselves. One could hardly expect Hitler to watch the two policemen rolling over and over in the village street without utilising the opportunity to wipe out at least one old score.

Hitler had, I am informed, several ideas in mind; (a) a rising in Salzburg followed by a general rising in Austria; (b) a rising among the Sudeten Germans; (c) seizure of Memel; (d) the Rhineland. He dismissed Memel first because it is at best a sprat which might bring him nevertheless into conflict with the League and the Guarantor Powers. He dismissed the Sudeten Germans because they too are only small fry and not worth a European war at this juncture. There remained Austria and the Rhineland. He chose the latter for the reasons given in my telegram No. 50 Saving² of to-day.

About the middle of February it looked as though oil sanctions had been dropped and Hitler talked to his cronies about nothing but Anglo-German friendship. The Gustloff murder³ kept him busy until the debate in the French Chamber on the Soviet Treaty roused his attention to more important matters. While the Ministry for Foreign Affairs suggested an appeal to the Hague tribunal or a conference of the Locarno Powers, Hitler felt inclined to issue a statement denouncing Locarno, which would clear the way for reoccupation of the demilitarised zone if the time ever came (see my telegram No. 37).⁴

Then came the decision to take oil sanctions at Geneva on the 2nd of March, for which Hitler seems to have been quite unprepared.⁵ Herr von Hassel[1]⁶ came from Rome and explained the Italian attitude, namely that Mussolini was not prepared to make any advances to Germany but that it was quite on the cards that he would have to leave the League and Locarno. Hence my telegram No. 43. It was then that Hitler put on his thinking-cap.

¹ Volume XV, No. 556.² No. 76.

³ Herr Sigmund Gustloff, Gauleiter of the National Socialists in Switzerland, was murdered by a Yugoslav medical student at Davos on February 4, 1936. The Swiss Bundesrat then banned National Socialist organizations above the local level, and maintained this decision in spite of a protest by the Reich Government on February 20.

⁴ Volume XV, No. 549.⁵ A marginal comment by Mr. Eden here reads: 'No such decision was ever taken.'⁶ German Ambassador at Rome.

If Italy threatened to leave Locarno, it was more than likely that France would ask Great Britain without further delay whether the Locarno Pact became null and void by such one-sided denunciation. If Germany followed Mussolini's example and denounced Locarno, the French would be faced with a *fait accompli*. Further reflection showed Hitler that danger might arise even before Italy denounced Locarno. There was nothing to prevent M. Flandin putting a question to Great Britain and drawing a statement from the Secretary of State in the House of Commons that a violation of the demilitarized zone would be regarded by Great Britain as a violation of Locarno, irrespective of any repudiation by Italy of Locarno.

On 2nd and 3rd March Hitler talked the position over with Göring and Goebbels in the *Reichskanzlei*. Göring pressed strongly for immediate action lest Germany should be stymied by a British declaration. Hence my telegram No. 44 of 4th March.⁷ The following day, 5th March, the German Embassy in London must have telegraphed that Paris had asked us for an assurance that we would intervene should Germany declare Locarno invalid.⁸ It was then obvious to Hitler that he must act without waiting for Mussolini. The ratification by the Chamber of the Soviet Pact⁹ gave him exactly the stick he wanted to beat the dog. There was no time to be lost, the Army Chiefs were summoned on the following day, 6th March. As reported in my telegram No. 51,¹⁰ they advised strongly against the military occupation of the Rhineland before the legal situation had been cleared up by a public statement on the part of the Chancellor and a notification to the Powers concerned. To this Hitler replied that it was essential to create a *fait accompli* by sending in troops before notifying the signatories to Locarno. To this the Generals replied that if Germany were ordered by the Powers to remove her troops war would be inevitable. Hitler answered that he hoped he could rely on the German army to defend German soil, particularly the Rhineland, if called upon to do so. He then gave orders for the occupation of the zone to begin at 5 a.m. on the following morning, promising to make a statement to the country a few hours later.¹¹

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

⁷ No. 15.

⁸ There is nothing to confirm this statement in *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*

⁹ See No. 22.

¹⁰ No. 27.

¹¹ Sir R. Vansittart commented on the front page of this letter: 'Most interesting. I think that S. of S. shd see. Also Mr. Sargent and Mr. Wigram. The really interesting part is para 2, which shows the range of appetite & lack of scruple.' Mr. Eden in a marginal comment was more critical. 'If this account is accurate, German information must be more inaccurate than I can readily believe. A. E.' In a separate note, Mr. Sargent wrote on March 17: 'I should have thought that what decided Hitler to precipitate the Locarno issue was not the action of the League in imposing oil sanctions, which, as the Secretary of State points out, it never did, but the League's renewed offer to mediate peace between Italy and Abyssinia. Is it not natural that Hitler should fear that this offer would be accepted by both parties and would then rapidly lead to a reconciliation between Italy and Great Britain on the one hand and Italy and the League on the other? If such a development was impending,

it obviously was in Hitler's interest to act quickly while the quarrel between Italy and the Stresa partners and the League was still an active factor in European politics operating in Germany's favour.'

No. 82

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 62¹ Telegraphic [C 1806/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 13, 1936, 1.10 p.m.*

My telegram No. 61.²

Following is record of informal discussion between Ministers of Four Locarno Powers last night.

M. Flandin first outlined to us the procedure which he wished to follow. In the first instance the Council would be asked to approve resolution condemning Germany's breach of Articles 42 and 43 of the Versailles Treaty and Article 4 of the Locarno Treaty. Then the Council would be asked to adopt a resolution to facilitate negotiation by calling upon Germany to withdraw from the demilitarized zone for the period of that negotiation. In this connexion M. Flandin pointed out that Germany, previous to the violation, had had a considerable number of unauthorised troops in the zone, say 20,000. These troops had been officially brigaded since the violation of the treaty. It was not to be expected that Germany would withdraw these elements; what she would be asked to withdraw were the nineteen battalions, the artillery and the mechanised troops that she had brought in as a consequence of her violation. M. Flandin contemplated that this invitation by the Council should be accompanied by a 'quasi promise' that if Germany would agree to negotiations upon these terms it would be understood that the negotiations would be started immediately, and that the precedent understanding should be that the result of the negotiations should be to recognize the re-establishment of German sovereignty over and military occupation in the demilitarized zone. M. Flandin thought that it was hardly conceivable that a request from the Council so accompanied by assurances of satisfaction for Germany could be rejected because the Chancellor declined to withdraw nineteen battalions.

M. Flandin, however, also made it clear that his offer of a 'quasi promise' was dependent upon the ability of the guarantor Powers to make clear their own engagements in the Locarno that was to be negotiated in a more precise form than had existed in the 1926 [*sic*] treaty. It was necessary to be realistic about the future, and if once the demilitarized zone had gone it would not be possible for France and Belgium to spend days in discussion as they had done this time as to what course was to be taken. The obligation would have to be clearly specified and its operation automatic. In addition the French

¹ No. 71 to Rome, No. 26 to Brussels, No. 51 to Berlin.

² No. 75.

Government would ask for conversations between the general staffs in order to make automatic action possible. Such conversations would be upon the same basis as those which the French and Belgian staffs had had for some years past. M. Flandin made clear that while in the subsequent negotiations the French Government might be willing to agree to legalise the presence of German troops in the zone, they could not adopt a similar attitude towards fortification of the zone. When pressed upon the aspect of the inevitable reaction of this continuing restriction upon German sovereignty, Belgian Prime Minister suggested that it would not be unreasonable to meet this position on the lines of equality of rights as from a given date, viz. 1936, i.e. that no more fortifications should be permitted to be erected on either side of the frontier than were in fact in existence at that time.

We pointed out in the discussion that followed that the programme which Monsieur Flandin outlined was hardly one which Germany could be expected to accept. If she could not accept it the result might mean war. If the result were war and Germany were beaten, what would the world then have gained? Was it to be thought that Germany could be taught a lesson by such means? Monsieur Flandin replied that the purpose was not to teach Germany a lesson; history showed that the Germans were slow learners anyway; the purpose was to show the nations of Europe that international law was strong and that the collective system was worth supporting. Monsieur Flandin emphasised that the next challenge would not be an attack upon France or Belgium, but very likely an attack upon Czechoslovakia or Austria. If we failed to meet the present challenge, who could possibly say that Germany would be stopped in her next venture?

When we impressed on M. Flandin the consequences that must ensue from military action aimed against Germany in the zone, he replied that the French Government were not contemplating anything in the nature of a general advance into the Rhineland, the most they would do would be to seize one or two key positions (*gages*) which they would hold until Germany was induced to respond to the Council's invitation and negotiate.

Belgian Prime Minister maintained that object was to find a resolution the terms of which would not be such as to humiliate Hitler, but which would at the same time vindicate international law. He wished to make plain that it was not his view that if we asked too much of Hitler there was not a risk of war; on the contrary, he thought that the man was of the type who if driven to extremes might deliberately resort to war. His object was, therefore, to avoid driving Germany to extremes. The problem was to find a resolution which would satisfy this need. On our remarking that M. Flandin's suggestion seemed to us of a character which might goad Hitler to action Belgian Prime Minister seemed still to hope to find some solution by which Germany would reduce her garrison in the Rhineland to a symbolic figure, though he admitted to being shocked by the terms of the reply which the German Ambassador had left (see my telegram No. 49 to Berlin³). Finally at our suggestion Belgian Prime Minister undertook to produce a

³ See No. 74, note 2.

resolution which would seek to fulfil the desiderata he had outlined, and sketch a procedure which would afford us a positive basis of discussion.⁴

Repeated to Moscow No. 21, Warsaw No. 22, Prague No. 27, Belgrade No. 30, Bucharest No. 34, Constantinople No. 10, Washington No. 78, The Hague No. 7.

⁴ Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 414.

No. 83

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 13, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 85 Telegraphic [C 1817/4/18]

Secret

BERLIN, *March 13, 1936, 2.15 p.m.*

I learn privately from a sure source that two of the senior generals strongly deprecated the sudden decision of Chancellor to move troops into the Rhineland. No arrangements had been made because that was practically the only territory which the army command had ignored in their calculations knowing that they would not attack and that France would not attack them. Everything therefore had to be improvised.

The Chancellor justified his action to the generals by pointing out that a new situation had arisen as a result of information from the German Embassy in Rome forecasting Italy's defection from Locarno as a result of oil sanctions.¹

There is still the greatest uneasiness in high military and business circles.

The army feels that even if this coup succeeds without a war Germany gains no compensating military advantage, whilst she risks intensifying the suspicion and hatred of all European countries. The army also feels that it is being forced to run an unnecessary risk merely to enhance prestige of the Nazi party and provide a favourable election platform.

It must of course not be concluded from the above that the army would not fight to the bitter end if hostilities break out.

¹ Cf. No. 81.

No. 84

*Mr. Hadow¹ (Prague) to Mr. Eden (Received March 13, 2.55 p.m.)
No. 9 Telegraphic [C 1809/4/18]*

Immediate

PRAGUE, March 13, 1936, 2.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 8.²

M. Benes³ asked me today to transmit to you following 8 points regarding position and attitude of Czechoslovakia as a result of German action:

1. That⁴ treaty between Czechoslovakia and Germany which was purposely associated with Locarno engagements is rendered invalid.
2. Franco-Czech mutual assistance agreements⁵ are appreciably weakened and Czechoslovakia is left in a more exposed position.
3. Czechoslovakia cannot admit unilateral denunciation of treaty obligations voluntarily undertaken by Germany.
4. Czechoslovakia supports in principle French decision to refer German action to Geneva as only proper line to pursue.
5. Despite all statements to the contrary solidarity of Little Entente is now absolutely assured.
6. Little Entente consider Anglo-French solidarity as essential to peace.
7. Whatever decision Great Britain and France take jointly Czechoslovakia (and Little Entente) declares its firm intention to apply . . .⁶ 'even though Czechoslovakia is first country that would be attacked'.
8. Little Entente will engage in no separate negotiations with Germany maintaining a correct and unprovocative but cool and firm attitude 'so long as dangerous situation created lasts'.

Above contains nothing unexpected or new but I was asked categorically to transmit it without delay as a declaration by President of the Republic to His Majesty's Government. Points 2 and 7 are frank admissions of Czechoslovak weakness and reflect growing nervousness apparent in official circles.

¹ First Secretary in H.M. Legation at Prague and Chargé d'Affaires during the absence of the Minister, Sir Joseph Addison, on leave.

² This telegram, after delay in transmission, was received in the Foreign Office on March 13 at 3.30 p.m., although it had been drafted on March 11. It stated Mr. Hadow's impression that Czechoslovakia would take no initiative in the Rhineland crisis but would await Franco-British decisions.

³ President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia.

⁴ A marginal note by Mr. Wigram here read: 'Arbitration treaty of 16th Oct 1925.'

⁵ A marginal note by Mr. Wigram here read: 'presumably the agreements of 1920 & Oct 16, 1925.'

⁶ The text was here uncertain. The word 'sanctions' was suggested on the filed copy.

No. 85

Mr. Hadow (Prague) to Mr. Eden (Received March 13, 3.5 p.m.)

No. 10 Telegraphic [C 1807/4/18]

Immediate

PRAGUE, March 13, 1936, 2.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 7.¹

In reply to a tentative enquiry M. Benes made following categorical declaration to me today.

Czechoslovakia has no military or military-aviation agreements with U.S.S.R.; has and is preparing no aerodromes for Soviet aeroplanes as a base for Soviet attack upon Germany; has no Soviet military aviation personnel at its aerodromes; has no intention to permit Soviet aeroplanes on their way to assist France to land on Czechoslovak territory.

Wording is my own but I took careful note as M. Benes wished me so to inform you in case you felt it would be useful to make these facts public in London.

Copy by bag to Berlin.

¹ In this telegram of March 12 Mr. Hadow referred to information 'from a very secret source' that on March 11 the Soviet Minister at Prague 'informed the Czechoslovak Government of the desire of his government to use Czechoslovakia as landing ground for 350 Soviet aeroplanes which were, at Monsieur Flandin's personal request, to be sent by air from Russia to France with only this one landing'. He referred also to threatening remarks by General Goering which he thought might be due to a report from the same source.

No. 86

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 13, 2.50 p.m.)

No. 89 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1810/4/18]

BERLIN, March 13, 1936

I gather that United States Embassy here is taking the following line in telegrams to Washington. Though Herr Hitler's action may be technically a breach of existing agreements and Franco-Russian treaty technically legal, nevertheless this opportunity for a general settlement should not be missed.

There has been no attempt since the war to negotiate with Germany on a genuine footing of equality. There has been no attempt since Herr Hitler came into office (1) to take him at his word and consider his disarmament or other proposals or (2) to take advantage of sentimental side of his character.

Though Germany might be defeated in a fresh resort to arms today the position in Europe would be no better. There would be no guarantee that the French would prove more reasonable at a fresh peace conference than they were at Versailles. In other words seeds of fresh wars would be planted in a new peace treaty. Proof of this is the fact that France twenty years after the war is still clamouring for a one-sided demilitarised zone.

The attitu[d]e of Great Britain is the determining factor.

The United States Embassy is urging the German Government to send Herr Dieckhoff¹ to London to state the German case though I gather that Germans do not consider they have ever been actually invited.²

¹ *Ministerialdirektor* Dr. Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff was Director of Department III of the German Foreign Office, responsible at this time for relations with Great Britain, Ireland, the United States of America, the Far East, and other areas.

² The telegrams from the United States Ambassador in Berlin, Mr. W. E. Dodd, between March 7 and 13, as printed in *F.R.U.S.*, 1936, vol. i, pp. 207-39, do not appear to embody any of the positive recommendations of the above telegram.

No. 87

Mr. Hadow (Prague) to Mr. Eden (Received March 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 11 Telegraphic [C 1851/4/18]

Immediate Most Secret

PRAGUE, March 13, 1936, 9.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 10.¹

Gist of information from the same source as my telegram No. 7² is that on March 12th Czechoslovak Cabinet bowed to further Soviet pressure (ostensibly based upon inevitable crisis in the West owing to France's implacable determination not to yield) and agreed in spite of categorical . . .³ decision to the contrary to allow the Soviet aeroplanes for France to land on Czechoslovak territory.

When Monsieur Benes was informed on the same evening he expressed misgivings and urged utmost secrecy; stating at the same time that representatives of Great Britain and Italy should (presumably because their governments might have misgivings regarding Soviet assistance of this description before the outbreak of any hostilities) be informed that no binding agreement of a military nature existed between Czechoslovakia and Soviet and that it was not proposed to use Czechoslovak territory as a base for Soviet aircraft.

This tallies with part of Monsieur Benes' statement to me today but⁴ is hardly the whole truth if above is correct.

Unless Monsieur Flandin's urgent request for Soviet aeroplanes is correct, motive for Soviet action would seem from here to be an attempt to provoke Germany. For well-informed German speaking circles here have long maintained that any Czechoslovak assistance to Soviet would be regarded by Germany as direct proof of 'Russian menace to German territory' and I doubt whether flight would be allowed to pass unchallenged.⁵

¹ No. 85.

² See *ibid.*, note 1.

³ The text was here uncertain.

⁴ This word has been altered to 'which' in an emendation on the filed copy.

⁵ This telegram caused considerable concern in the Foreign Office. Mr. Wigram, in a minute of March 14, suggested that M. Flandin should be at once consulted and drew

attention to a report that 'the question of practical cooperation, in air force matters (between Russia & Czechoslovakia) was taken a step further at the end of December 1935'. He remarked that the Foreign Office had no precise information as to whether the Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty provided for military co-operation. Mr. O'Malley wrote: 'We must first take some steps to make sure of not compromising a valuable source of information. I should be inclined to await developments for a couple of days before taxing M. Flandin. There may be advantages in letting the Soviet Govt., or even M. Flandin, overplay their hands. O. O'Malley, 14/3.'

No. 88

Record by Sir R. Vansittart of a conversation with M. Corbin

[C 1833/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 13, 1936*

The French Ambassador came to see me this afternoon. He said that the attitude of the French public in the matter of the violation of the demilitarized zone was stiffening. This had been confirmed to him both telephonically by M. Léger and by M. Paul-Boncour who had arrived in London this afternoon.

M. Corbin said he would be brief, but there were a few absolutely vital things that he wished to say to me and which he hoped I would say to His Majesty's Government. The entire future of Europe depended on the result of these London meetings. The supreme disaster would be if they resulted in any Franco-British estrangement, for that would mean the destruction of Europe and the domination by Germany of all the smaller States. He trusted that all this was fully realised here. He knew very well, and the French Government knew very well, that we were most anxious to find a settlement, and in the process of hunting for such a settlement it was very natural that we should exercise considerable pressure on the French representatives. This was well understood, but it would only be understood up to a point. There must be some limit to the process, and he felt sure that we for our part would equally understand this. Above all, he impressed upon me with all the earnestness at his command the vital necessity of this country standing by its obligations.¹ If it were sought to evade them (and there were already signs in this country that many people would like to evade them), it would mean the collapse of the League and the whole post-war system with consequences even greater and on which he would not wish to dwell.

It may be remembered how much this idea had been present to the mind of M. Titulescu,² whom I had seen an hour before.³ And, as in the case of

¹ A marginal note by Mr. Eden here read: 'It is not for France to lecture us. A. E.'

² Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

³ According to Sir R. Vansittart's record of this conversation M. Titulescu said: 'Surely it could not be [that] England contemplated breaking her engagements because somebody else had done so. He spoke here with considerable emotion, and emphasised that he was speaking not as a Minister, but as a man.'

M. Titulescu, I did my best to reassure the French Ambassador, and, reminding him that we were people who kept our word, I deprecated any undue anxiety and felt we should be best served by a resolute optimism.

R. V.

No. 89

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 17)

No. 326 [J 2358/4/1]

ROME, March 13, 1936

Sir,

With reference to my telegram No. 149 of the 12th March, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith translations of the letter addressed to me by Signor Suvich on the subject of the bombing of the British Ambulance at Quoram and of the Aide-Mémoire referred to therein.¹

2. The bombing of this ambulance and the absurd Italian accusations against the ambulance staff unfortunately illustrate a dark side of the Italian character. I hazard the guess that the original bombardment was the work of some undisciplined young airmen of the stamp of Count Galeazzo Ciano² or the two sons of Signor Mussolini. In this connection it is perhaps worth recording that according to one account published in the 'Times'³ the machine which was responsible for the first bombardment bore the number 'S 62'. If this report were correct, the machine would be the second of number six squadron, which is in fact in East Africa and which forms part of No. 14 group whose commander was brought down and killed over Abyssinian territory a few days before the bombing of the British ambulance. It will be recalled that the bombing of the Swedish ambulance followed closely on the killing of an Italian airman, and, though in the present case there was no question of atrocities, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that his death might have predisposed the personnel of the group to some act of vengeance. It must also be remembered that the Italian propaganda machine has for a long time past been spreading stories of how, on the Abyssinian side, the Red Cross sign has been abused to cover almost every form of military activity. In this connection I enclose a cartoon from 'Le Vie dell'Aria', a paper circulating among the Italian Air Force, which

¹ Signor Suvich's letter and the aide-mémoire of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, both dated March 12, 1936, are printed in *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, among the annexes to the minutes of the 91st (extraordinary) session of the Council (pp. 480 and 481). Sir E. Drummond's telegram No. 149 gave the gist of the Italian aide-mémoire of March 12. His subsequent letter of April 10, replying at length to the statements in the aide-mémoire, is also printed in *L/N.O.J.*, pp. 481-3, and is not printed here.

² Signor Mussolini's son-in-law, formerly Minister for Press and Propaganda, went to East Africa as a captain in the Italian air force in August 1935.

³ See *The Times*, March 6, 1936, p. 14.

contains a comparatively mild example of this kind of propaganda.⁴ Given the frame of mind induced by the recent death of a commanding officer, the effect on the Italian temperament of constant propaganda regarding the abuse of the Red Cross and given the character of some of the Air Force officers in East Africa, it is possible to imagine an Italian airman flying over the Quoram plain and, being unable to find any Abyssinian detachments on which to drop bombs, picking out the ambulance as a perfect target. Even this hardly explains how the ambulance came to be bombarded on three separate occasions.

3. Having committed the initial crime of bombing a hospital, it is unfortunately not in the Italian character to admit that a fault has been committed and seek to make such amends as may be possible; the situation is further complicated by the fact that according to the account given in the 'Tribuna' article,⁵ of which I enclose a translation, and to which I referred in my telegram No. 148 of the 12th March,⁶ Vittorio, Mussolini's son, was apparently involved in at least one of the bombardments and it is to be noted that the squadron to which Vittorio Mussolini belongs is under the command of Count Ciano.

4. Finally having bombed the ambulance and having decided to answer accusations with unfounded assertions, the Italian Government might at least have constructed a story less palpably untrue on even the most cursory examination. Marshal Badoglio speaks of bombardments of the ambulance on the 3rd, 4th and 5th March; but there was no bombardment on the 3rd March and indeed the photograph of the ambulance published in the 'Stampa' of the 12th March (see cutting enclosed)⁶ would hardly have been taken in the face of the 'violent anti-aircraft fire' referred to in Marshal Badoglio's report. So far as concerns the sequence of events the account given in the 'Tribuna' is far more coherent. Since the press censorship at Asmara is exceedingly severe, it is somewhat surprising that any correspondent should have been allowed to send home a story differing so substantially from the official version. It is tempting to suppose that Count Ciano himself may have been the author of the Italian account of the bombardments and that he neglected to make his story equally clear to Marshal Badoglio and the press.

5. People in Italy drugged with much propaganda, may believe the strange story served up for their edification; but no one outside Italy is likely to be favourably impressed by this astonishing production. Unfortunately this does not make it any more likely that representations to the Italian Government will induce them to abandon the attitude that they have chosen to adopt; in the case of the bombardment of the Swedish ambulance they

⁴ The cartoon, in issue No. 5 of the paper dated February 2, 1936, showed a map of Ethiopia entirely covered by a Red Cross emblem, with the comment: 'La carta dell' Etiopia, come la vorrebbero aggiornata coloro che nutrono legittime preoccupazioni di visite aeree . . .'

⁵ From *Tribuna* of March 13 according to the translation, which is of a report from Asmara dated March 12.

⁶ Not printed.

refused absolutely to accept any version except that put forward by their own military authorities and in the present instance the personalities involved make it even less likely that they will be prepared to take upon themselves any share of the blame.

6. An exchange of accusations and counter-accusations is clearly unlikely to liquidate the incident or to serve any useful purpose, though obviously we cannot allow the assertions of the Italian Government to remain unchallenged. The only course which offers even a remote possibility of bringing about a settlement would be to endeavour to persuade the Italian Government to agree to the submission to arbitration of the facts of the bombing of the ambulance. I fear however that there is little if any hope that the Italian authorities would be ready to consent to such a course. They would probably base their refusal on the grounds that the airmen in question were on active service and therefore clearly unable to appear before any arbitrator. The offer would, however, afford further evidence, if any were needed, that we were convinced of the righteousness of our cause.

I have, etc.,

ERIC DRUMMOND

No. 90

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 14, 9.50 a.m.)

No. 91 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1828/4/18]

BERLIN, March 14, 1936

My telegram No. 52 Saving.¹

Telegrams from London now admit that English opinion has persistently stiffened against Germany owing to the growing consciousness that a treaty breach has been committed and that England's pledged word to France is involved.

France's threat to leave the League is also said to have made a strong impression in England.

In general however public opinion here has not grasped the gravity of the situation.

¹ In this telegram of March 12 Sir E. Phipps reported the quotation in *Angriff* of that date of a statement from London that Herr Hitler's proposals had 'captured the imagination of the British nation' so that 'the whole ground has been cut from beneath the British Government's feet. The cry for sanctions even amongst the parties of the Left has been silenced . . . The only possible course [for the British Government] is to play the role of arbitrator . . .'

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)
No. 63¹ Telegraphic [C 1861/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1936, noon*

My telegram No. 62.²

Following is record of two informal discussions between Ministers of four Locarno Powers yesterday, begins.

In the morning Belgian Prime Minister produced a draft proposal dealing with the future status of the Rhineland and security arrangements to replace the Locarno treaties. This proposal was discussed at some length (copy enclosed in my despatch No. 149³ to Brussels today). The French Government stated their point of view which was in the main that the proposed security arrangements needed strengthening and that the value of the paper must depend upon which of the alternative views in respect of the evacuation of the Rhineland or the recognition of German occupation in some form or other, were adopted.

In the afternoon, Monsieur Flandin stated that after reflection he had several further comments to make and, after certain suggestions for the improvement in form of the earlier part of the draft, we reached again the critical question of the attitude to be adopted towards Germany's military occupation of the zone. At this point Monsieur Flandin called upon Monsieur Paul-Boncour to make a statement as to the attitude of French public opinion. Monsieur Paul-Boncour, recently arrived from Paris, told us that he was staggered to find how far already we had drifted from the point of view of the French public. He would not conceal the fact that if this paper were to appear in France it would be rejected insofar as it departed from the principles of international law, etc. etc. In his view it was quite indispensable that the German troops should be withdrawn from the Rhineland as a preliminary to negotiations. We told Monsieur Paul-Boncour that in our view the policy which he put forward might well result in war. We believed that the German Chancellor could not withdraw from the Rhineland all the troops which he had put into it. To ask him to do so was to court refusal with all the consequences; more particularly since Monsieur Boncour himself had visualised successive stages of economic, financial and military sanctions. We added that we were convinced that British public opinion was not prepared to go to war in order that the Germans should be compelled to go out of the Rhineland one week and be allowed to come into it the next. In the view of the British public it would not be worth the number of British lives.

Monsieur Flandin explained that even if military sanctions were reached it was not necessarily intended to attack the Rhineland if effective economic and financial sanctions together with a blockade might suffice for the purpose

¹ No. 75 to Rome, No. 27 to Brussels, No. 53 to Berlin.

² No. 82.

³ No. 100 below.

in the present depressed condition that exists in German industry and finance. We, however, maintained our attitude that to demand the complete evacuation of the Rhineland was to ask for refusal. This view was supported by Belgian Prime Minister, whose attitude was that it was essential to put before the Germans an offer which was moderate in their eyes and in the eyes of the world. If the German Government refused to accept that offer it would be essential that the Locarno Powers should see the matter through to the end whatever the consequences. Belgian Prime Minister laid emphasis upon there being agreement to do this among the Locarno Powers before the process was begun.

Since matters appeared to have reached a deadlock we suggested that in view of the apparent impossibility of agreeing upon a formula in respect of the evacuation of the Rhineland, the French representatives should consider some other line of approach. Monsieur Flandin said that there was always the matter of security. What would be the position of France during the negotiation and in the event of its failure? If French Ministers could secure some guarantees of security in this respect the position for them would be considerably eased and Monsieur Flandin at least would have something with which he could do battle with his public. Belgian Prime Minister supported this view.

It was finally agreed that before the meeting this afternoon⁴ Monsieur Flandin should produce his own draft articles in regard to the French proposals.

Repeated to: Moscow No. 22, Warsaw No. 23, Prague No. 28, Belgrade No. 32, Bucharest No. 35, Constantinople No. 11, Washington No. 81, The Hague No. 8.

⁴ Presumably that recorded in No. 109 below.

No. 92

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 14, 9.45 p.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1878/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, March 14, 1936

Your telegram No. 55.¹

Chancellor is at Munich and will only be back here after midday tomorrow Sunday, so I delivered your message to Baron von Neurath, who said that the German Government had received the invitation from the Secretary General of the League to attend the Council meeting as a Locarno Power.

Baron von Neurath cannot give a definite reply to this invitation until

¹ This Foreign Office telegram, despatched at 6.45 p.m. on March 14, forwarded the text of the message, printed in *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 124, expressing the British Government's earnest trust that Herr Hitler would accept the invitation to send a representative to the League of Nations Council meeting in London.

after the Chancellor's return, but he is asking M. Avenol whether this invitation means that the German representative will take part in the Council on terms of absolute equality with the other Powers, and whether he will eventually have the right to vote. He particularly wishes this cleared up by tomorrow, as he would object to the German representative being summoned under Article 17.

Please expedite M. Avenol's reply.

If the invitation is accepted, it is not decided whether Baron von Neurath or Herr von Ribbentrop will go.

No. 93

Mr. Eden to Mr. Hadow (Prague)

No. 30 Telegraphic [C 1887/4/18]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1936, 10 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 7,¹ 11² and 12.³

I questioned Monsieur Flandin today as to rumours that Russian aeroplanes were proceeding to France via Czechoslovakia, without of course mentioning my source of information. He gave me a most categorical denial.

Repeated to Paris No. 66, Moscow No. 29 and Berlin No. 56.

¹ See No. 85, note 1.

² No. 87.

³ Not printed. This telegram of March 14 gave details of a Czechoslovak Cabinet meeting on March 12 at which 'Pan-Slav wing led by Machnik won the day (for the passage of Soviet aeroplanes)', according to 'information vouchsafed in strictest secrecy by reliable Czech supporter of present government'.

No. 94

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 14, 10.35 p.m.)

No. 95 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1879/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, *March 14, 1936*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I addressed a pressing personal appeal to the Minister for Foreign Affairs to use all his influence with the Chancellor to induce him to send a representative and thus to help towards a settlement of a very grave crisis. I asked to be received by the Chancellor tomorrow, and if I see him I shall do my utmost in this sense also.

Minister for Foreign Affairs says that if a German representative goes to London, he could hardly reach there before Monday afternoon.

¹ No. 92.

*Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)**No. 64¹ Telegraphic [C 1876/4/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1936*

The Council of the League of Nations met in London this morning to consider the communication from the French and Belgian Governments in regard to Germany's repudiation of the Locarno Treaty.

After the day's procedure had been settled at a private meeting,² a public meeting was held,³ when the French and Belgian communications were read to the Council.⁴

After welcoming the Members of the Council to London I emphasised the solemnity of the occasion and said that the future would depend upon the wisdom of the Council's decisions. I would reserve the main body of my observations for a later occasion and would, at the present meeting, give place to the representatives of France and Belgium whose anxieties we shared as fellow signatories and guarantors of Locarno. For the present I would only say that in the view of His Majesty's Government a patent and incontestable breach of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles relating to the demilitarised zone and of the Treaty of Locarno had been committed. If this conclusion was shared it would be for the Council to deal with the situation and to endeavour to find a solution of the difficulties with which we were confronted. The other signatories of the Locarno Treaty and the other Members of the Council might count on the fullest co-operation of His Majesty's Government in all endeavours to establish peace and understanding among the nations of Europe upon a firm and enduring foundation.

Monsieur Flandin then stated the French case at some length. His conclusion was that he would ask the Council to declare that Germany had committed a breach of article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles and to notify its finding to the Powers signatory to the Locarno Treaty. That notification would place the guarantor Governments in a position to fulfil their obligations of assistance. The Council would also have to examine how it could support this action by recommendations addressed to Members of the League.

Monsieur van Zeeland emphasised the special position of Belgium on the same lines as he had done in Paris (see my telegram from Paris No. 121).⁵ In the Belgian view the guarantees offered by the Treaty of Locarno continued to exist notwithstanding Germany's repudiation, and Belgium desired that the Treaty should be applied in all strictness. Although the repudiation had deeply affected Belgium and although the memories of the war were still alive and bitter, he intended to use the language not of emotion but of

¹ No. 4 Saving to Brussels, No. 9 Saving to Berlin, No. 17 Saving to Rome.

² At 11 a.m. See *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 310-11.

³ The public meeting began at 11.45 a.m.

⁴ *L/N.O.J.*, *ibid.*, p. 312.

⁵ Cf. No. 61, note 1.

reason. Only by so doing could be [he] contribute to the re-construction of international life upon the ruins of what had been destroyed, for notwithstanding what had happened treaties would be required in the future as in the past. He asked the Council, in virtue of the Locarno Treaty which Belgium intended to apply to the end, to take solemn note of the infringement of article[s] 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles.

This concluded the proceedings of the public meeting.⁶ The Council will meet again in public session on the afternoon of March 16th.

At a subsequent secret meeting of the Council it was decided to invite Germany as a Contracting Party to the Locarno Treaty to take part in the examination by the Council of the question submitted by the French and Belgian Governments.⁷

⁶ For the full text of the speeches by Mr. Eden, M. Flandin, and M. van Zeeland see *L/N.O.J.*, *ibid.*, pp. 312-15.

⁷ See No. 99 below.

No. 96

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 16)

No. 78 Saving: Telegraphic [J 2344/1000/1]

ROME, March 14, 1936

Roumanian Minister¹ informs me that Signor Suvich recently told him that opinion in Italy believed that anxiety of His Majesty's Government to bring about a settlement of dispute between France and Germany was due to a desire, when this had been achieved, to bring all her weight to bear in order to obtain the extension of sanctions against Italy; this was believed to have been the reason why the Committee of Thirteen had been adjourned.² Roumanian Minister gave me to understand that Signor Suvich had said much the same thing to the French Ambassador.

I remarked that this was very typical of Italian mentality which could not imagine that Italy was not in the forefront of everybody's international preoccupations.

Repeated to Paris No. 1 Saving by bag.

¹ M. I. Lugosianu.

² Presumably a reference to the fact that the Committee of Thirteen, after its appeal on March 3 to the belligerents in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute for the immediate opening of peace negotiations, had not met on March 10 as planned to consider the replies of the two belligerents: cf. *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

Record by Mr. Wigram of a conversation with Prince Bismarck¹
 [C 1933/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1936*

Prince Bismarck telephoned this morning to say that the German Ambassador had instructed him to come round and make a communication from him to Mr. Sargent or myself. As Mr. Sargent was out, I told him he could come round and see me.

Prince Bismarck's first point was that the Ambassador had instructed him to emphasize the importance of the Chancellor's offer (Foreign Office telegram No. 49 to Berlin²) that the strength of the troops in the demilitarised zone would not be increased at present and that it was equally at present not intended to station those troops nearer the French or Belgian frontiers.

I said that the Secretary of State had already told the Ambassador that he was considerably disappointed with the Chancellor's reply; and that it was not possible for me to add anything to what he had said. Prince Bismarck said that the Ambassador thought that the Secretary of State's demands were such as, were they accepted, would cause the Chancellor to lose prestige and to increase French prestige. I said that the German Government did not seem to have considered the difficulties which their action had caused us.

Prince Bismarck maintained that our newspapers were not estimating the importance of the German offer. I said that it was not the newspapers that mattered but what the Secretary of State said.

The second point which Prince Bismarck wished to make was that the Chancellor's offer was one; and that it seemed to the Ambassador that the importance of the second part of the offer—that concerned with the future régime of security as opposed to the occupation of the zone—was not receiving the attention which it merited.

I told Prince Bismarck that it was probably precisely because the offer or action of the Chancellor was one that the press here was not as enthusiastic as the German Government might wish about the second part of the proposal. After all, the proposals for future treaties were accompanied by the unilateral breach of an existing treaty freely agreed. I reminded Prince Bismarck that the Secretary of State had already told the Ambassador that he would carefully consider the latter part of the Chancellor's offer and that the declaration relating to Germany's attitude to the League was most important.

Prince Bismarck then said that the Ambassador wished him to say that as the offer was one, if coercive measures were resorted to (as seemed to be suggested in certain sections of the press) in respect of the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the second part of the offer—that relating to the future—would, he supposed, fall to the ground. I replied that I thought it would be well to

¹ Counsellor at the German Embassy in London.

² Cf. No. 74, note 2.

be careful how this kind of statement was made; otherwise it might be thought that it was in some way an attempt to put pressure upon us.³

³ A minute by Sir R. Vansittart read: 'Very interesting. Mr. Wigram spoke well—particularly at the end. R. V. March 14.' Mr. Eden, also on March 14, commented: 'Disconcerting.'

No. 98

Record by Sir R. Vansittart of a conversation with M. Massigli
[C 1858/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 14, 1936

Monsieur Massigli spoke to me this morning after the meeting of the League Council.¹ He said that he was greatly perturbed at the course that opinion in France was tending to follow, particularly under the influence of stimulations which he deplored. Those stimulations were in fact that we had egged on France in the autumn and that many elements in France had been dubious as to how far we in our turn could be relied upon in the event of French interests being more directly threatened than they were by the Italo-Abyssinian conflict. Questions have been officially addressed to us on this subject and we have given an official reply of assurance.² In spite of that the doubt persisted and was now being fostered, particularly in view of the unfortunate reactions of parts of the press in this country to the present crisis.

Monsieur Massigli repeated that he was exceedingly perturbed at the lengths to which developments in France might tend in the event of failure to agree in London.

He then came to the real substance of his representation. He said that a reference to the Hague Court was the limit to which the French Government could now be pushed. (I would recall in this connection what Monsieur Corbin said to me yesterday to the effect that it was well understood that we should be trying to exercise a certain degree of pressure on the French Delegation, but that there must be limits to that degree.) Monsieur Massigli said that to begin immediate negotiations with a Power that had just torn up a perfectly good and valid treaty would, in French opinion, savour of *opera bouffe*, particularly as Germany had already committed this international offence several times before. He thought, however, that a reference to the Hague Court, during which of course there would be no negotiations, was probably the best solution in our present very difficult circumstances. He hoped, however, that I would make it clear to His Majesty's Government that France could go no further than this, and that any attempt to push her further would have a deplorable effect on public opinion in France, which was being exploited in the direction which I have described above.

It will be remembered that not only Monsieur Corbin but Monsieur

¹ See No. 95, note 2.

² Volume XIV, Appendix to No. 650.

Titulesco was yesterday very sceptical as to the extent to which this country could be relied upon to honour its engagements.

R. V.

No. 99

Record of a private meeting of the League of Nations Council¹ on March 14, 1936, at 12.45 p.m.
[C 1860/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1936*

The purpose of the meeting was to consider whether and, if so, in what form, an invitation should be sent to Germany to be represented at the present meeting of the Council.

The PRESIDENT (Mr. Bruce) recalled that the Secretary-General had, on March 8th, communicated to the German Government the terms of the French request for a meeting of the Council,² and had added that if the German Government, as contracting party to the Locarno Treaty, wished to take part in the examination of this question by the Council, he would be grateful if they would so inform him. This was as far as he and the Secretary-General had thought it proper to go in the first instance.

M. FLANDIN (France) said that the Secretary-General's communication to the German Government was perfectly correct. Germany had the right to attend the present meeting as a signatory of Locarno. As a result of the Secretary-General's notification, it was open to Germany to come or not as she pleased.

He then quoted Article 4 of the Locarno Treaty, and said that it was in virtue of that article that the Council was now meeting. Germany had a perfect right to attend, and in view of the action which the Secretary-General had taken, it might well be held that there was no reason at all for the present to consider sending any invitation to Germany under Article 17³ of the Covenant.

¹ Held after the public meeting recorded in No. 95.

² *L/N.O.J., op. cit.*, p. 312.

³ Article 17 was as follows. '1. In the event of a dispute between a Member of the League and a State which is not a Member of the League, or between States not Members of the League, the State or States not Members of the League shall be invited to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, upon such conditions as the Council may deem just. If such invitation is accepted, the provisions of Articles 12 to 16 inclusive shall be applied with such modifications as may be deemed necessary by the Council. 2. Upon such invitation being given the Council shall immediately institute an inquiry into the circumstances of the dispute and recommend such action as may seem best and most effectual in the circumstances. 3. If a State so invited shall refuse to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, and shall resort to war against a Member of the League, the provisions of Article 16 shall be applicable as against the State taking such action. 4. If both parties to the dispute when so

He would, however, have no objection to the issue of an invitation under Article 17, provided (1) that a clear distinction were drawn between (a) the communication of the Secretary-General under the Locarno Treaty and (b) the invitation under Article 17; and provided (2) that should any invitation be sent to Germany under Article 17, that invitation should be in the terms of that article, and should make it clear that, if Germany accepted it, she would also be accepting the obligations of Membership in the League for the purposes of the present meeting.

M. TITULESCU (Roumania) associated himself with M. Flandin's statement. He thought that Germany ought to be invited in a double capacity, i.e. as a party to Locarno, and as a non-Member of the League under Article 17.⁴

It was important not to issue the invitation under Article 17 alone, because if this were done the Council would be admitting by implication that by repudiating the Locarno Treaty Germany had released herself from the obligations of that Treaty. In the view of the Roumanian Government, the Locarno Treaty continued to exist in spite of Germany's action. That was why he thought it was necessary that the invitation should be sent to her as a contracting party to the Treaty.

The PRESIDENT (Mr. Bruce) asked whether M. Flandin's meaning was that if Germany had come to the Council in response to the Secretary-General's notification, she could have come without conditions and could have played the same part as any other member of the Council, whereas, if the invitation were issued under Article 17, this would embody a different set of circumstances and would imply the express undertaking by Germany of certain obligations.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the notification which he had made to Germany had been sent under the terms of the Locarno Treaty. An invitation under Article 17 would be a different matter in that Article 17 requires the assumption of certain obligations by a non-Member State, and that such an invitation could only be sent by the Council itself. An invitation under Article 17 would not merely imply the right of Germany to attend the Council (this she already possessed under Locarno), but the regulation of the conditions under which she could participate.

M. LITVINOV⁵ (Soviet Union) said that any reference to Article 17 would cause confusion. Articles 12 to 16, to which Article 17 made reference, had not been invoked in the present case. Would it not be simpler for the Council merely to repeat the notification of the Secretary-General to Germany and to confirm it?

MR. EDEN (United Kingdom) said that he was content to accept invited refuse to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, the Council may take such measures and make such recommendations as will prevent hostilities and will result in the settlement of the dispute.'

⁴ Herr Hitler had announced Germany's withdrawal from membership of the League of Nations on October 14, 1933; her withdrawal became effective on October 21, 1935.

⁵ Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

M. Titulescu's proposal, namely, that the invitation should be sent on a double basis, i.e. under Locarno and under Article 17. It was important that the applicability of Article 17 should not be excluded.

M. FLANDIN repeated that he had no objection to an invitation under Article 17, provided that Article 17 was applied in its entirety, and that the invitation was expressed in the terms of that article.

M. LITVINOV (Soviet Union) said that, so far as he could see, the only obligation which Germany would accept under Article 17 would be the obligation not to resort to war.

M. TITULESCU (Roumania) said that for once he must disagree with M. Litvinov. Under Article 17 Germany would accept the obligation not merely not to resort to war but to conform to the whole procedure which the Council would follow under Article 17 prior to the issue of its report. The Council had wide powers under Article 17, one of which might be the recommending of 'mesures conservatoires'.

The PRESIDENT (Mr. Bruce) said that there was one point on which he was not clear. It had been suggested that a double invitation should be sent to Germany. Was it contemplated that Germany ought to accept the invitation on both grounds, or could she accept one of the invitations only? Could she, for example, say that she accepted the invitation as a Locarno Power, but would not accept it under Article 17?

M. TITULESCU (Roumania) said that if Germany accepted any invitation, he would be only too pleased.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL observed that there was a point of principle involved in this question. What was the status of a non-Member State sitting at the Council? Must that status always be governed by Article 17, no matter in what form the invitation to attend might be issued?

The PRESIDENT (Mr. Bruce) said that the first practical question to decide was whether or not the Council wished to confirm the Secretary-General's notification to Germany.

MR. EDEN (United Kingdom) pointed out that what the Secretary-General had sent was a notification, not an invitation. Was it not an invitation which was now required?

M. FLANDIN thought that it ought to be a notification, not an invitation.

MR. EDEN said that to send anything less than an invitation would be a grave political error.

M. MUNCH⁶ (Denmark) said that he thought that Germany ought to receive an invitation both under Locarno and under the Covenant.

In his view, the Council's only duty under Locarno was to decide whether there had been an infraction of the Treaty or not.

M. FLANDIN here observed that M. Munch had overlooked Article 7 of the Treaty of Locarno, which said that that Treaty was not to be interpreted as restricting the duty of the League to take whatever action might be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of the world. This was in effect to preserve the action of the Council under Article XI of the Covenant, and the

⁶ Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

French Government had always held that the powers of the Council under that Article were very wide.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL at this point read the draft of the communication to the German Government.

M. FLANDIN said that he approved this draft.

MR. EDEN said that he also agreed, provided that it was understood that the applicability of Article 17 was not thereby excluded.

The PRESIDENT said that it would be open to the Council at some later stage to ask Germany to accept the obligations of membership of the League as stated in that article.

It was then agreed that the invitation should be despatched to Germany in the terms of the Secretary-General's draft, which reads as follows.

'Referring to the telegram which I sent to the German Government on March 8th, the Council of the League of Nations invites the German Government, as contracting party to the Locarno Treaty, to take part in the examination by the Council of the question of the communication from the French and Belgian Governments. The Council will meet at St. James's Palace on Monday, March 16th, at 3.30 p.m. AVENOL. Secretary-General.'

The meeting then rose.

No. 100

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 149 [C 1830/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1936*

Sir,

With reference to my telegram No. 63¹ to Paris of to-day, I transmit to you herein copy of the proposals submitted by the Belgian Prime Minister to the meeting of the Ministers of the Locarno Powers, other than Germany, at the Foreign Office yesterday.

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 100

Proposals communicated by Belgian Prime Minister, March 13, 1936²

Translation

SECTION I

The representatives of the four Powers signatories of the Treaties of Locarno, other than Germany, that is to say, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Belgium, in common agreement,

¹ No. 91.

² M. van Zeeland's proposals are not printed in *D.D.B.*, *op. cit.*

I. Declare that—

(1) A breach of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles has been and is committed by Germany;

(2) In conformity with paragraph 1 of Article 4 of the Treaty of Locarno, France and Belgium have, as they are entitled, immediately brought the question before the Council of the League of Nations;

(3) All the obligations and all the guarantees devolving upon or in favour of the signatories under the Treaty of Locarno are maintained in their entirety until a new convention has been concluded or an arbitral decision given;

(4) The said breach of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles and the unilateral repudiation of the Treaty of Locarno being such as to endanger the maintenance of world peace, Article 7 of the Treaty of Locarno becomes applicable.

II. Decide to communicate to the Council of the League of Nations, as soon as that body has taken its decision and given notice, as provided in paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Treaty of Locarno, a proposal designed to cause the Council to submit to the High Contracting Parties the recommendations mentioned in Articles 3, paragraph 3; 4, paragraph 3, in fine; 4, paragraphs 2 and 3.

III. Decide to draw up as follows the recommendations which they propose to make to the Council of the League of Nations.

SECTION II

Draft of Recommendations to be adopted by the Council of the League of Nations

The Council of the League of Nations,

I. Reverting almost textually to the resolution which it adopted on the 17th April, 1935,³ which is to-day even more clearly applicable than at that moment;

considering:

(1) That the scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations is a fundamental principle of international life and an essential condition of the maintenance of peace:

(2) That it is an essential principle of the law of nations that no power can liberate itself from the engagements of a treaty nor modify the stipulations thereof unless with the consent of the other contracting Parties:

(3) that the breach of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles and the unilateral repudiation of the Treaties of Locarno by the German Government is in contradiction with these principles:

(4) That by this unilateral action the German Government confers upon itself no legal right:

(5) That this unilateral action, by introducing a new disturbing element into the international situation, must necessarily appear to be a threat to European security:

³ Cf. Volume XII, p. 878.

II. Invites Germany to lay her complaints immediately before the Conciliation Commission provided for under paragraph 3 of article 3 of the Treaty of Locarno and immediately to cease to infringe the provisions of articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles.

To this end it recommends to Germany

(i) To withdraw from the demilitarised zone the troops which have been sent there since the 7th March; or

(i) To suspend immediately all despatch of troops into the Rhineland; or

(i) To limit the contingents stationed in the Rhineland to the effectives corresponding to the official German declarations, that is to say, to X . . . battalions as a maximum;

(ii) To keep in their stations the detachments sent into the demilitarised zone since the 7th March as well as the troops reincorporated in the Reichswehr and the rearmed Labour Corps; to prohibit all manœuvres, transfers or movements on their part;

(iii) To carry out strictly all the other arrangements implied in the undertakings regarding the demilitarisation of the Rhineland zone, in particular those which concern the prohibition against building fortifications;

(iv) (*sic*) Recommends that all the signatories of the Treaty of Locarno should undertake forthwith to consider as definitive and compulsory for all of them the decisions of the Conciliation Commission;

(v) Decides to summon immediately an international conference with the object of liquidating the problems with which the League of Nations is faced by the facts related above;

(vi) Recommends that the suggestions set out below should be adopted as the basis for the opening of negotiations, the said basis being considered as indivisible, and its acceptance by all as the preliminary condition of all conciliatory action;

(i) To take note of the German proposals 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (and Czechoslovakia and Austria) 7.

(ii) Revision of the status of the Rhineland. Search for a solution on the basis of the equality of rights of the neighbouring States ('*Gleichberechtigung*').

(a) Limitation of effectives stationed in the Rhineland to those which were there formerly in peace time;

(b) Equivalent limitation of the effectives stationed in a corresponding zone in France, Belgium (and in Holland);

(c) Establishment of a forbidden zone on both sides of the common frontier, Germany on one side, France, Belgium (Holland) on the other, in which the presence of any military elements would remain definitively forbidden;

(d) Prohibition of the erection in future of any fortified works in a zone to be fixed on each side of the common frontier between Germany on the one hand, and France, Belgium (and Holland) on the other hand.

III. Compensation to be made to France, to Belgium (and to Holland)

for the diminution of security which the revision of the status of the Rhineland in the sense above indicated would represent for them.

(a) Automatic functioning of the action of the guarantors in the agreements replacing the Locarno Treaties.

(b) Agreement regarding the establishment of contacts between the General Staffs to lay down the technical conditions in which the obligations undertaken in the pacts would eventually be brought into effect.

(c) Increase of the material precautions laid down in the multilateral pacts.

IV. Organisation on a precise, definite and effective basis of the system of collective security (revision of article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations).

SECTION III

The Powers signatories of the Treaties of Locarno

I. Declare that they agree to support, at the Council of the League of Nations, the draft recommendations set out above.

II. In the event of these recommendations being made by the Council of the League of Nations, they undertake

(1) To apply them as a whole.

(2) To place all their influence and all their resources at the disposal of the League of Nations with a view to their complete and effective application of these recommendations by all concerned.

III. Emphasise that the recommendations in question, which only constitute a beginning, are clearly insufficient to ensure the final settlement which is desirable; they consequently reserve to themselves the right to put forward in due course, and each Power, in so far as it is concerned, their own suggestions or representations.

No. 101

Mr. Eden to Sir P. Ramsay¹ (Copenhagen)

No. 91 [C 1592/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1936*

Sir,

The Danish Minister had asked to see me on March 9th, but in my absence at the Cabinet² he saw Lord Stanhope.

2. Count Ahlefeldt stated that he had been asked by his Foreign Minister to find out what were the reactions of His Majesty's Government to the

¹ H.M. Minister at Copenhagen.

² See No. 48, note 20.

recent German move. He hoped that His Majesty's Government did not take the situation too seriously and that there was no question of imposing sanctions on Germany. He said that Denmark had only two markets, the United Kingdom and Germany, and that if she lost the German market the effect would be the ruin of Denmark. It was felt in his country that in any future war Germany was likely to march straight in and occupy Denmark, which was entirely defenceless.

3. Lord Stanhope told the Danish Minister that although His Majesty's Government felt that Germany's unilateral repudiation of Locarno was a very serious matter and one that cut at the foundations of all treaties, they did not treat the matter too tragically. He said that I had asked His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris to counsel calmness in France and to endeavour to ensure that the French Government should do nothing to render the situation more difficult. He then read to Count Ahlefeldt the second page of my telegram No. 42 to Sir George Clerk.³ He said that he could give him no information as regards sanctions, as the Cabinet was at the moment considering the whole situation, but that in any case this was a matter which would no doubt be discussed at Geneva and decided by the Council of the League. He informed Count Ahlefeldt that Lord Halifax was going out to Paris with me to consult with the other Signatories of the Locarno Pact and that then the matter would be transferred to Geneva.

4. The Danish Minister seemed to be reassured by Lord Stanhope's statement and said that his Government would be relieved that His Majesty's Government felt that there was no serious danger of war.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

³ No. 37.

No. 102

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received March 15, 11.10 a.m.)

No. 104 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 2309/84/1]

Most Secret

ADDIS ABABA, March 15, 1936

Your telegram No. 67.¹

Military Attaché was flown up from Dessie to Koram and delivered your message on March 12th. The Emperor made no comment but let it be seen that he was disappointed. He said that he had no reply to send for the moment but may wish to send one on the occasion of Military Attaché's next visit. He unburdened himself at some length on the subject of the inefficiency of the League of Nations.

¹ Volume XV, No. 540.

No. 103

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received March 15, 11.10 a.m.)

No. 105 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 2306/84/1]

ADDIS ABABA, March 15, 1936

On March 13th the Abyssinian Government issued a *communiqué* denying report from Rome of direct negotiation with Italy. No negotiations have, it states, been opened with the Italian Government or the Italian authorities.¹

¹ A minute by Mr. Peterson read: 'This may not cover either Afework or Rickett. M. Peterson 16.4 [?]'. Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Rickett (cf. Volume XIV, Nos. 236, 245, note 1, and 311) were reported in Sir S. Barton's telegram No. 121 of March 21 to the Foreign Office to have arrived in Addis Ababa on March 20, and to be 'more interested in peace feelers than in oil negotiations on this occasion'. Sir S. Barton's further telegram, No. 127 of March 26, stated that Mr. Rickett had left Addis Ababa 'for reputed destination Bagdad' and that he was said to have seen the Ethiopian Minister of War and other authorities. Italian peace proposals were said to have been received at Jibuti about the end of February by M. Afework Jesus, late Chargé d'Affaires in Rome, and to have received a flat refusal by the Emperor: cf. No. 218 below.

No. 104

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 15, 12.45 p.m.)

No. 98 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1888/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, March 15, 1936

I have just been half-an-hour with the Chancellor and Baron von Neurath.¹

I opened with a strong personal appeal to the Chancellor to face the difficult task of His Majesty's Government and of Germany's friends in England in their strenuous efforts to reach a peaceful solution of this terribly grave crisis and to send over to the Council meeting in London a man who would represent his views as fully as possible and who knew his innermost thoughts and could answer questions and take responsibility.

The Chancellor made his usual tirade about German honour and declared that he could not do anything that left that out of account. He laid stress on great extent of offers he had made and said that he could not add to those offers in any way: they were made in perfect loyalty and good faith and had only been possible by previous vindication of German honour and full sovereignty.

His Excellency then . . .² it would be impossible for him to send a representative over to London merely to have his head washed and to be humiliated before the world. I said that this was not anybody's intention. Locarno had been broken and it would clearly be necessary to certify that in a formal

¹ There is no German record of this interview: cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 124, note 6.

² The text was here uncertain.

manner. Where fruitful results could be achieved would be afterwards in private and frank conversations between Locarno Powers and others. The mere fact of his man coming over would make a most favourable impression on all peace lovers and his great strength over his own people should enable him to take this action without any possible risk to German honour.

I added that I proposed to inform my Government that he accepted the Council's invitation. The Chancellor said he could only give me a definite reply this afternoon.

My impression is that he will agree.

No. 105

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 15, 1.30 p.m.)

No. 99 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1889/4/18]

Immediate

BERLIN, March 15, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I told the Chancellor I would stake my head that nothing would be said to any representative whom he might send that could be considered wounding to German honour. I earnestly trust that if one comes efforts will be made to prevent any member of the Council from indulging in cheap recrimination. The hour has passed for that. Nor can we hope that a single German soldier will be withdrawn from the Rhineland.

The Chancellor is still under the impression of the quite unparalleled ovation he received yesterday at Munich² but I worked my hardest and I hope with some success to persuade him of the terrible gravity of this crisis and the rising anti-German feeling in Great Britain. I urged him to do something to encourage and strengthen his English friends and not to play into the hands of his enemies. I urged him also to consider *British* as well as German honour and to remember that Britain was bound by her signature . . .³ given. I used these arguments to Baron von Neurath last night.

¹ No. 104.

² Sir E. Phipps's telegram No. 97 of March 15 referred to Herr Hitler's address to this meeting, in which he said among other things that he would never yield on a vital issue where Germany's honour was involved. Sir E. Phipps thought that the 'applause at the end of his speech surpassed anything that has been heard in the past'. The speech is summarized in *The Times*, March 16, 1936, p. 11. It formed part of the Reichstag Election campaign after the remilitarization of the Rhineland; cf. Norman H. Baynes (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922–August 1939*, vol. ii, pp. 1304–23.

³ The text was here uncertain.

No. 106

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 15, 1.45 p.m.)

No. 135 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1891/4/18]

Immediate Secret

PARIS, March 15, 1936

Following from the Air Attaché.¹

I had a very full and frank conversation with chief of second section of air staff on the morning of March 18th (*sic*)² when he assured me that no preparatory action such as movement of service units, calling up of reserves, formation of new reserve cadres or increased activity in French air industry had been taken as yet owing to manifest dangers of such action. Lieutenant Colonel Duvernoy gave his view that if financial and economic sanctions could be agreed on it would place on Germany the onus of initiating the attack on the League Powers. While he hoped that this would not take place he appeared to view this eventuality with comparative equanimity. In view of probable external support, he assured me however that France would take no other steps likely to precipitate a catastrophe.

In the circumstances therefore I think it highly doubtful whether this officer or the French Air Ministry had any inkling of the contemplation of so dangerous a proposal as the despatch of Russian aeroplanes to France via Czechoslovakia.³

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ Group Captain R. M. Field.

² Another account shows that this conversation took place on March 13.

³ Cf. Nos. 85, 87, and 93.

No. 107

Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Mr. Eden (Received March 15, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 32 Telegraphic [C 1897/4/18]

MOSCOW, March 15, 1936, 6.54 p.m. [sic]

Your telegram No. 31.¹

Staff Officer of Commissariat of Defence on being questioned regarding these 'consultation rumours' stated that they were complete *canard*. French Ambassador here also professes entire ignorance of any such rumours. I am making further discreet enquiries but at first sight I am inclined to agree with opinion expressed by Soviet staff officer that this is a German invention intended to justify further German action.²

¹ This Foreign Office telegram of March 14 asked for observations about Mr. Hadow's reports on Soviet aircraft (Nos. 85, 87, and 93).

² A minute by Mr. O'Malley of March 14 shows that he still thought that the information received from Mr. Hadow 'is so circumstantial that it is very difficult to believe that it is unfounded'. Sir R. Vansittart wrote on March 17: 'I confess that I was both suspicious &

apprehensive at first, but my grounds for that have been at least attenuated.' Mr. L. Collier wrote on March 20: 'It is now clear that the whole story was a "canard", wherever it came from.'

No. 108

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 15, 5.55 p.m.)

No. 103 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1896/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, March 15, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram.¹ Translation of German reply telegraphed to M. Avenol follows in my immediately succeeding telegram.²

Baron von Neurath in handing me this document said that if reply of Council were favourable Herr von Ribbentrop will be ready to go to London on Tuesday, accompanied by Herr Dieckhoff and the assistant legal adviser of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

¹ Not printed: it said that the German reply was about to be handed to Sir E. Phipps.

² Not printed. The text of the German Government's reply, dated March 15, is printed in *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 123, and in *L.N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, p. 316. The reply stated that the German Government was in principle prepared to accept the invitation of the Council, on the understanding that its representatives would be on a footing of equality with the representatives of the members of the Council in the proceedings and conclusions of the Council. The penultimate sentence stated that the German Government could participate only if the Powers concerned were prepared to enter into negotiations 'alsbald' on the German proposals. In the translation of the German reply placed before the Council on March 16 'alsbald' was translated as 'forthwith'. A note of March 16 by Mr. R. H. S. Allen of the Central Department said that Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, a Secretary in the German Embassy, had rung up that morning to say that the Embassy had just received instructions from Berlin that the word should be rendered 'in due course'. Mr. Allen noted that *Flügel* and other dictionaries consulted by the Foreign Office gave 'forthwith' ('directly, immediately, at once'). The translation in *The Times* (March 16, p. 12) also gave 'forthwith'. The German correction to 'in due course' was duly noted by the Council at its meeting on March 16.

No. 109

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 69¹ Telegraphic [C 1918/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 15, 1936, 8 p.m.

My telegram No. 63.²

Following is record of further informal discussion between Ministers of Four Locarno Powers yesterday evening.

At the outset Monsieur Flandin stated that since the conclusion of our

¹ No. 28 to Brussels, No. 79 to Rome, No. 59 to Berlin.

² No. 91.

previous meeting he had been in communication with Paris. He had thought it necessary to take this step in view of the warning which Monsieur Paul-Boncour had given to him, and indeed to us, at the last meeting. As a consequence of his communication with Paris he was sorry to have to report that the French Government could not accept Monsieur van Zeeland's proposals³ even as a basis for further discussion. In their view it was essential, as he had already told me in Paris, to uphold international law, and this could only be done by a German withdrawal from the Rhineland. Moreover, the French Government were not prepared to negotiate until the international position had thus been restored. Monsieur Flandin did not conceal from us that he regretted this decision, and that in his view there were valuable features in Belgian Prime Minister's proposals, even though there were others less welcome to him. He would have been prepared to negotiate upon that basis. His Government, however, took a different view, and he must accept it.

After some discussion we suggested to the French Ministers that perhaps it might be possible for them to elaborate any suggestions they might have for increase of security for France and Belgium to take the place of the demilitarised zone. We were convinced that it would not be possible to secure a German withdrawal from the Rhineland, and that to make an attempt to do so was to court certain failure and a grave risk of war. In these circumstances was it not better to see whether there were not some other way out of our present difficulty? The French Government could show us what were their requirements in respect of security. While we could not of course undertake that we should be able to meet them it would at least be something gained to know what their ideas were in this respect, as in others. Monsieur Flandin said that he would, if we wished, prepare a project, but he hoped that we might be willing to do the same. We resisted this suggestion, and told Monsieur Flandin that we feared that were we to do this our two projects might be found to diverge at almost every point. This would be a misfortune, and we would much prefer first to examine his project and then to prepare ours which would approach his views as closely as we could.

The French Ministers eventually agreed to this procedure, though they maintained that they must not be regarded as committed by it in any way.

The meeting then adjourned, and it was agreed that the next meeting of the Locarno Powers should not take place until after the Council had pronounced upon the violation of the Locarno Treaties.

Repeated to Moscow No. 32, Warsaw No. 24, Prague No. 32, Bucharest No. 36, Belgrade No. 33, Angora No. 55, Washington No. 83, and The Hague No. 9.

³ Cf. No. 100.

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on Germany and the Locarno Treaty

[C 2362/4/18]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 15, 1936

M. Flandin in the course of his last conversation at the meeting of the Locarno Powers invited His Majesty's Government to produce at our next meeting some statement of our policy and procedure which might form a basis of discussion. We resisted this appeal, and maintained that we would prefer to study M. Flandin's views before putting forward our own.²

At the same time it is clearly desirable, if only for the purpose of clearing our own mind, that we prepare some statement of our own views. For this purpose I circulate the attached paper to my colleagues.

In connection with paragraph 4(iii), M. van Zeeland had formulated certain proposals (see Foreign Office despatch to Brussels No. 149 of the 14th March).³ They were as follows:

- (a) Automatic functioning of the action of the guarantors in the agreements replacing the Locarno Treaties;
- (b) Agreement regarding the establishment of contacts between the General Staffs to lay down the technical conditions in which the obligations undertaken in the Pacts would eventually be brought into effect;
- (c) Increase of the material precautions laid down in the multilateral Pacts.

In my view the future structure of security in Western Europe should be in two parts: First, non-aggression pacts between Germany and France and Belgium, and perhaps Holland, which would be guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy. Second, a superstructure consisting of a pact of mutual assistance between Great Britain, France and Belgium, which would be open to Germany. It must be anticipated that France and Belgium will desire that this pact of mutual assistance should approach as near as possible to what the Belgian Prime Minister describes as 'automatic functioning'. In any event, it is certain that both these Governments will ask that the pact of mutual assistance shall include agreement on the establishment of contacts between the General Staffs of the signatory Powers.

A. E.

ANNEX TO NO. 110

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

(A) Finding by the Council, under Article 4(2) of Locarno, that a breach of Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles has been committed and notification of the finding to the Locarno Powers.

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 79(36).

² See No. 109.

³ No. 100.

(B) Resolution by the Council on the following lines:

1. Condemnation of Germany's action on following lines (Belgian draft):
'The Council of the League of Nations decides

(1) That the scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations is a fundamental principle of international life and an essential condition of the maintenance of peace;

(2) That it is an essential principle of the law of nations that no Power can liberate itself from the engagements of a treaty nor modify the stipulations thereof unless with the consent of the other contracting Parties;

(3) That the breach of Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles and the unilateral repudiation of the Treaties of Locarno by the German Government is in contradiction with these principles;

(4) That by this unilateral action the German Government confers upon itself no legal rights;

(5) That this unilateral action, by introducing a new disturbing element into the international situation, must necessarily appear to be a threat to European security.[']

2. Invitation to France and Germany to refer to either the Permanent Court of International Justice or the Permanent Court of Arbitration the question of the compatibility of the Franco-Soviet Pact with Locarno, and any other matters which it might be thought proper so to refer.

(N.B. The Belgian proposal was to refer 'the German complaints' to the Franco-German Conciliation Commission provided for under Locarno. The question whether the reference should be to conciliation or to one of the above Courts depends on the matters which it might be decided to deal with in this way.)

3. Arrangements to be laid down by the Council for the period pending and during negotiations proposed under 4.

(a) Reaffirmation of Locarno by the signatory Powers other than Germany. The following draft has been suggested:

'Nothing which has happened before or since the said breach has absolved the signatories under the Treaty of Locarno from any of their obligations or guarantees, which remain in their entirety until a new convention is concluded.'

(b) Stationing of an International Force, including British troops, on either side of the frontiers between France and Germany and between Belgium and Germany.

(c) In view of the despatch of the International Force, recommendation to Germany, France and Belgium to suspend immediately all despatch of troops or war material into the frontier zones⁴ of the three countries,

⁴ *Note in original:* Extent of these zones to be specified ultimately.

not to construct any new fortifications in those areas, and to suspend work on existing fortifications.

4. The Council takes note of the German proposals 2 to 7 and invites the five Locarno Powers to negotiate on basis of:

- (i) These German proposals so far as they concern the five Locarno Powers.
- (ii) Revision of the status of the Rhineland on the basis of equality of rights of neighbouring States.
- (iii) Compensation to France and Belgium for the diminution of security which the revision of the status of the Rhineland in the sense indicated above would represent for them.⁵

⁵ Copies of this memorandum and its annex were handed round at the meeting of the Cabinet on March 16, 1936. Mr. Baldwin stressed the great secrecy of the memorandum and the need for the utmost reticence about it even in conversations by his colleagues with their personal staffs. After discussing the suggested procedure paragraph by paragraph, the Cabinet agreed: (a) That owing to its secrecy copies of the memorandum should be handed back to the Secretary of State at the end of the discussion. This was done with two or three exceptions in the case of Ministers who had special reason to study the proposals. (b) To approve the proposals headed 'Suggested Procedure' attached to C.P. 79(36) subject to certain drafting alterations which were mainly designed to render them easier of acceptance by the German Government, and subject to the following amendment to replace paragraph 4 (iii): 'the framing of pacts of mutual assistance to reinforce the security of the parties concerned.' (It was noted that the object of this alteration was 'to get rid of the idea of "compensation to France and Belgium" by additional commitments at our expense, and to permit reciprocity by which we should benefit as much as the other Powers concerned'). (c) That Mr. Eden should be authorized, if he thought advisable, to communicate the suggested procedure, as amended above, to the French Ministers in the course of conversations on the following day when M. Flandin would be presenting his own proposals. 'It should be made clear that we should have to insist on some *quid pro quo* in the form of mutual assistance to ourselves.'

No. 111

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 478 [C 1899/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 15, 1936*

Sir,

After the lunch given by Mr. Bruce to the Council yesterday, M. Flandin drew me on one side for a few minutes conversation. He intimated that he was a good deal perturbed at the reports which were reaching him of the play of internal politics in France. (From other sources I learn that M. Laval is doing his best to weaken M. Flandin's position). In all the circumstances M. Flandin thought it essential to gain time. He would therefore propose to me some such programme as the following.

2. If the Council were to meet on Monday¹ and Tuesday they could take on the latter day a vote on the *constatation* of the violation, and on the Wednesday M. Flandin might return to Paris for a consultation with his colleagues, returning for a further meeting of the Council on Thursday. In the meanwhile M. Flandin suggested that we might perhaps avoid having any further meetings between the Locarno Powers. He was afraid that the communication he would have to make to me at the meeting of the Locarno Powers this afternoon would be a very unwelcome one, but he asked me not to take it too tragically. If I would content myself with saying that I would take note of what he said and suggest the adjournment of our meeting, this would assist him, for in the meanwhile, in addition to preparing an official project which he feared would be unwelcome, he would prepare an unofficial project which would be his own, and which he would hand to me personally. This personal document would go as far as he could to meet our views, and he would much like my personal impression on it before he returned to Paris. The tactics he proposed to follow in Paris were to make plain to the French Government that what they hoped for was unattainable, and he indicated that what he hoped was to obtain a measure of agreement for his own personal project.

3. I replied that I fully appreciated M. Flandin's difficulties. For my part I was quite prepared to follow the procedure he had suggested, and quite prepared to receive any document that he might care to communicate to me. At the same time he would of course appreciate that it would not be possible for me to give him any views, even a personal one, at very short notice on a document of this importance, and therefore I hoped that he would let me have his proposals as early as possible.

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

¹ i.e. March 16.

No. 112

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 16)

No. 351 [C 1912/4/18]

Secret

PARIS, March 15, 1936

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned document.

Name and Date

Subject

Military Attaché, No. 11, March
14th, 1936

Interview with General Gamelin on
present situation

*Colonel Beaumont-Nesbitt to Sir G. Clerk**Secret*

PARIS, March 14, 1936

Sir[,]

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that, at General Gamelin's request, I visited him this morning.

He began by reviewing the action taken by the French during the past week and stressed its purely defensive character. About 60,000 men in all were now in position, and this number was considered fully adequate for the needs of the moment. Care had been taken to avoid giving the impression that there was any question of Mobilisation, or that the French intended to use force. No reservists or 'disponibles' had been called up, not even among the 'frontaliers'.

2. General Gamelin then proceeded to discuss the consequences of the recent German action. For the French it meant that the Germans were now within immediate striking distance of the French frontier. In consequence, the possibility of an 'attaque brusquée' was increased, and to meet this threat further defensive measures on the French side of the frontier might be necessary. But this, as the General pointed out, was really a problem which France must decide for herself.

3. What to him was of more vital importance, and which he wished to bring to the particular notice of the British General Staff, was the fact that the Germans might not be content merely to reoccupy the Rhineland, but would also strongly fortify their side of the frontier.

He realised that such fortifications must have a special interest for France, but,—and this was the aspect with which he was most concerned at the moment,—they would also have serious repercussions on the rest of Europe.

4. From the military point of view, the construction of fortifications in the Rhineland raised, in his opinion, far wider issues than did the reoccupation of that area. A glance at the map would show how admirably the terrain lent itself to purposes of defence. On the German left was the Rhine, in the centre the Vosges, on the right the Moselle. A fortified system on this general line would cover the German left should that power ever contemplate repeating 1914. I would remember how at the beginning of the last war the German High Command had secured its left behind the defended position at Metz, and had then thrown all the weight of its attack on to the right flank.

5. In the future—for it was of that he was now thinking—with a fortified system of the extent suggested, this manoeuvre could be repeated on an even greater scale. Moreover, the ability to strike rapidly and secretly which motorisation had conferred on an army, would enable the German right wing to be pushed forward into Holland and Belgium during the first hours of the campaign, while its left was secure from any French counter-attack. There was no need for him to emphasize what this would mean both to England and to France. The establishment of air bases, and possibly even

submarine bases in Holland and Belgium, could not leave either of us unmoved.

6. There was yet another side of the picture: Suppose Germany, having constructed these fortifications, decided to turn Eastwards against Austria, Czecho-slovakia or Poland? The French, in such a case, would find their way barred and be unable to bring that instant reinforcement to their Central European allies which was so vital. Their only recourse would be to carry out, in an inverse direction, a turning movement through Belgium, an operation which he thought the Belgians would scarcely appreciate. However much they might welcome the presence of French soldiers fighting in the defence of Belgium, they could not be expected to view with equanimity their country being turned into a battlefield for the sake of Czecho-slovakia or Poland! Another alternative was to operate through Italy, but to do that Italy must be brought back into the fold. In any event, both these courses depended on conditions over which France had no direct control. The one positive factor which emerged was that the only direct route by which France could go to the help of her allies, or bring real pressure to bear on Germany, would be closed to her.

7. Of course, he remarked, if Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria could construct fortifications, on the same scale as those in France, along their frontiers facing Germany, then they might be able to resist the initial blow until French action began to take effect. Time would be the essence of the problem, for, as he pointed out, considerable preparations would be necessary before any attack could be launched against a heavily fortified line either by the French or the Germans, and this delay might save the situation. He could not, however, regard it as practical politics for these countries to construct such defences.

8. He then turned for a moment to consider,—still from the European and not only from the French point of view—what results might follow from this German hegemony over Central Europe. He saw an all-powerful Germany, her strength and prestige enormously increased by her latest acquisition, turning once again against Belgium and France. This could not be an attractive prospect for anyone, and he reminded me that England's traditional policy had always been to retain the balance of power in Europe.

9. I then asked General Gamelin whether he would consider German fortifications along the Rhine as being equally dangerous. To this he replied that no doubt such a system would be less of an embarrassment than fortifications in close proximity to the French frontier, though, of course, there could be no question of any bridgehead being established on the Rhine from Strasbourg southwards. The construction of defences at Cologne and similar towns would at least ensure that the French and German systems were not in immediate contact, and would leave an open area over which an aggressor could advance. In the case we had just been considering (France going to the help of her Central European allies) this would mean that French troops could penetrate into Germany and directly threaten the large industrial area bordering the Rhine. A comparatively small advance would enable

modern artillery, with its largely increased range, to reach many of the towns in this area. Moreover, the increased depth which would thus be gained would compel the Germans to keep their air bases further back and allow French air bases to be moved correspondingly nearer.

10. General Gamelin showed no inclination to pursue this matter further, nor did I consider it to be judicious to do so, and the subject was allowed to drop. But before terminating the conversation he referred to the suggestion put forward by the Germans, that the French should abandon their fortifications. This suggestion he could not take seriously. For financial reasons alone it was quite impossible for France to do so. But there was also the question of moral[*sic*]. The population of Alsace-Lorraine could not be allowed to think that they were defenceless. Furthermore, any drastic renunciation of this character might have a very serious effect on the country as a whole.

11. He concluded the interview by again impressing upon me that he was thinking not so much of France, not so much of the present, but of Europe generally, and of the future of European peace. For him, the most serious problem which the Germans had raised, was not so much the remilitarisation of the Rhineland but the consequences which might follow from the construction of fortifications along their mutual frontier. This was the really vital factor in the present situation and the one to which he hoped the British General Staff would give its most serious consideration.

F. BEAUMONT-NESBITT
Colonel G.S.
Military Attaché

No. 113

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 72¹ Telegraphic [C 1976/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 16, 1936*

My telegram No. 64.²

Council met in private session this afternoon and decided to proceed to immediate consideration of telegram received from German government in reply to Council's invitation to German government to send representative to the Council (for text see Berlin telegram 104).³

In ensuing secret sessions telegram was drafted replying to two questions put by German government.

As to the first reply was that German government would be represented on same terms as other guaranteed Powers under the Locarno treaties with full rights of discussion, the votes of the three Powers not being counted in calculating unanimity.

¹ No. 10 Saving to Berlin, No. 18 Saving to Rome, No. 5 Saving to Brussels.

² No. 95.

³ See No. 108, note 2.

As to second question it was not for the Council to give the assurance desired by the German government.

Public session was then held at which president reported that foregoing reply to German government has been sent.

French representative then laid a resolution before Council on behalf of France and Belgium. Resolution asked Council to find, that German government had committed a breach of Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles by introducing and establishing military forces in the demilitarized zone; and to instruct the Secretary General, in virtue of Article 4(2) of the Locarno treaty, to notify the signatory Powers of its finding.

President said that adjournment of further discussion was desirable in view of telegram sent to German government, terms of which he read.⁴

Council arranged to meet again tomorrow afternoon.

⁴ The debate at these two sessions is summarized in *L/N.O.J., op. cit.*, pp. 315-18. A more detailed record (C 2024/4/18) shows that Dr. Munch (Denmark) proposed at one point that in the reply to Germany's first question the words 'rights of discussion' should be extended to include the right 'to lay before the Council the German view as a whole, and to submit all the proposals it desires to make'. The proposal was, however, 'vehemently opposed' by M. Titulescu (Roumania), supported by M. Litvinov (Soviet Union). After a long debate the Danish proposal was omitted from the final version of the reply.

No. 114

Minute by Mr. Wigram

[C 2442/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 16, 1936*

M. Massigli came round this morning. After a great deal of talk about the iniquity of the German communication,¹ he said that the only thing to do after the 'constatation' of the breach of the Treaty by the Council was to secure a reference to The Hague Court of the question of whether the Franco-Soviet Treaty had invalidated the Treaty of Locarno.

I asked him how long the procedure of the Court was likely to take; and he said at least three months. I said that that would mean that the finding of the Court would not be issued before June, well after the French elections. He said that that was the important thing.

I asked him what would happen if the Court found that the Locarno Treaty had not been invalidated and if the Powers then asked Germany to withdraw from the Rhineland after all those months and she still refused. He said that he supposed that in those circumstances it would be necessary to have negotiations on the whole situation.

I said that the great thing then for the French was that they should not have to enter into negotiations with Germany until after the elections; and he more or less agreed.

¹ Cf. No. 108, note 2.

I understood that, pending the decision of the Court, the French Government wanted some sort of international control in the Rhineland to see that the forces were not increased and that the zone was not fortified, and that they were not against accepting the same kind of thing in the French frontier district. But I suppose this point will be dealt with in the French memorandum this afternoon.²

R. F. WIGRAM

² Commenting on Mr. Wigram's minute, Mr. Sargent wrote: 'It is becoming increasingly clear that if we want general negotiations with Germany we will be defeating our own ends by trying to rush them at present. Our object must be to keep the position open until after the French elections and to try then to have some sort of conference. This, indeed, is the underlying idea of the "Suggested Procedure" [cf. No. 110] which is to be put to the French . . . O. G. Sargent. March 17th, 1936.' Sir R. Vansittart wrote: 'I agree. The point is one which I have already stressed. We cannot & must not be hurried if we are to succeed. R.V. March 17.'

(No. 115)

*Record of conversation between the Chancellor of the Exchequer¹ and
M. Flandin²*

[C 1974/4/18]

March 16, 1936

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he had met M. Flandin on the previous day and had had a frank talk with him of an hour and one-half's duration. He had already reported the matter to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and to the Prime Minister. M. Flandin at first outlined the situation in France. Apparently his own position and that of the French Government was very difficult with an election in prospect. He anticipated a combination between M. Tardieu (who was supposed to have retired from politics and to be writing books), the Croix de Feu and the Royalists and other disgruntled parties of the Right who united in criticising Parliamentary methods and threatened action on fascist lines. M. Flandin was also much concerned at the European situation. By her action in the Rhineland and the unilateral tearing up of treaties Germany had gone far to destroy confidence in international treaties. Unless international law was vindicated he apprehended that among the smaller nations there would be a *sauf-qui-peut*

¹ Mr. N. Chamberlain.

² This Record was also filed in the Foreign Office archives as a separate memorandum with the note, 'Extract from Cabinet Conclusions' (C 2400/4/18). It thus formed part of the minutes of the Cabinet meeting on March 16, which is described in No. 110, note 5. After hearing Mr. Chamberlain's statement Mr. Baldwin said that he was strongly in favour of the proposal to send British troops to form part of an international force in the Rhineland; he had, he said, 'anticipated that it would not arise at the moment but he congratulated the Chancellor of the Exchequer on seizing the opportunity that had offered and in mentioning it'.

and some of them were likely to run to Germany. Therefore he regarded a vindication of international law as essential. M. Flandin had thought he saw progress in some quarters here towards that attitude but he realized that the British nation could not agree to put sanctions on Germany as they had agreed in the case of Italy. M. Flandin was quite clear that France did not want war, but only that international law should be vindicated. He had made a suggestion that the Locarno Powers should close their ports to German shipping and stop all financial accommodation to Germany. He realised that the League as a whole could not be counted on to co-operate in this. He thought, however, that if the Locarno Powers would do so the situation would be such that Germany would have to give way.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer himself did not take that view and had suggested another possibility. He recalled that in a conversation with Herr Hitler, Mr. Ward Price had made a suggestion that an international force should be introduced into the demilitarised zone, as had happened in the case of the Saar.³ It would have to be stationed on both sides of the frontier. He had put that proposal to M. Flandin and it had been extremely well-received. M. Flandin had thought it would help France and be regarded as an action for the upholding of international law. The Chancellor of the Exchequer himself had suggested that there should be equal numbers stationed on both sides of the frontier, though in the aggregate it would only be a small symbolic force and not sufficient to stop an invader. M. Flandin had said that he could not formally accept the proposal, but he was 90 per cent. sure that his Government would accept it.⁴

The next step after an international occupation, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had suggested, was that the Locarno Powers should then meet.

M. Flandin, referring to the permanent terms of the settlement, had asked about fortifications.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that to prohibit the erection of fortifications in the Rhineland would be very difficult as Herr Hitler was extremely tender about his right to do anything that others were allowed to do.

M. Flandin had replied that the French fortifications were incomplete; that the Belgian fortifications were not regarded by the French as satisfactory; and that consequently the French were extending their fortifications towards the Channel.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that if the French and Belgian fortifications were so incomplete that their completion could be held up, that might be an assistance.

The next question raised had been that of additional security to France and Belgium owing to the German occupation of the Rhineland.

M. Flandin had asked what the British Government would think of the proposal that had been discussed at a meeting of the Locarno Powers for a pact of mutual assistance?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that he did not think that Herr

³ Cf. No. 147 below.

⁴ See note 6 below.

Hitler would enter any such pact as it was known he did not believe in multi-lateral pacts and preferred bi-lateral arrangements. But if there were to be a truce for twenty-five years and a non-aggression pact Herr Hitler could hardly object to the conclusion of the security pacts. In fact he had said so to the British Ambassador in Berlin.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had then commented on the fact that M. Flandin wanted something more specific in the way of assurance from this country. That, he had pointed out, would present a difficulty. There was a powerful school of thought in this country that disliked mutual pacts and would like to escape even from existing pacts. He had assured M. Flandin, however, that if he liked to put forward proposals they would be carefully considered.

M. Flandin replied that on such lines solutions might be found acceptable to the French Government.

The result of the conversation, therefore, was a suggestion for a truce during which an international force, largely British in character, would be stationed on both sides of the frontier. There would be no objection to a stipulation that neither Germany nor France nor Belgium should maintain troops adjacent to the frontier. There would be no fortification during negotiations.

After these arrangements had been made further discussions would take place for a permanent settlement on the basis of non-aggression pacts; no increase in fortifications; pacts of mutual assistance between France, Belgium and Great Britain, which would be open to Germany to join, if she so desired; the above pacts to be more strict and more closely defined. In addition, the pacts should offer the same guarantees to us as to the other nations.

In addition to the above the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that M. Flandin had asked what the British Government would do if Germany came back to the League of Nations and demanded colonies; also what Sir Samuel Hoare had meant by his reference to raw materials at Geneva?⁵

As regards the second point, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had replied that Sir Samuel Hoare had felt that the question of colonies was going to be raised soon by Germany and had therefore anticipated this by raising the question in the least objectionable form. The British Government realised quite well that Germany's real object was not raw materials but the return of colonies.

M. Flandin had then asked what we should do if the question of colonies was raised.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that the Cabinet had not yet discussed the matter. Personally, however, he thought that if we were in sight of an all-round settlement the British Government ought to consider the question.

M. Flandin then asked whether there could be an exchange of letters between the two countries undertaking not to discuss colonies with the Germans without consultation?

⁵ i.e. in his speech to the League Assembly on September 11, 1935; see Appendix IV to Volume XIV.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer himself had replied that the two countries ought to discuss the matter, but he did not like the idea of an exchange of letters, which had somewhat surprised M. Flandin who had thought it would be interpreted as meaning that we did not intend to give up any colony. So far as French colonies were concerned he was prepared to consider the question, but he feared lest by embarking on conversations first we might 'queer his pitch.'

M. Flandin had then asked if the British Government could state a maximum point beyond which they could not go: e.g. that the Germans must consent not to construct fortifications in the demilitarised zone.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had given him no encouragement on this line.

M. Flandin had then expressed his strong desire for a united policy between the two countries.⁶

⁶ A minute on this Record by Mr. Wigram reads: 'Either M. Flandin changed his view or there must have been some misunderstanding at this conversation. See particularly references to troops on either side of frontier. R. F. W. 18/3.'

No. 116

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 17, 11.20 a.m.)

No. 106 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1964/4/18]

Most Important

BERLIN, March 17, 1936

Baron von Neurath has just handed me a short statement of which following is translation made in his presence and with his approval.

'The German Government expects that His Majesty's Government will do its utmost in the circumstances of the case to bring about at the proper time a discussion with the interested Powers of our proposals'.¹

Upon receiving a private assurance from His Majesty's Government in the above sense Herr von Neurath promised that the German representative will be ready to leave for London, but it would be difficult for him to arrive before Thursday.

I questioned Baron von Neurath as to the precise meaning of the above, and he said that it did not necessarily imply that discussions should begin directly after the Council meeting, but that some near date should be envisaged.

It is not yet quite certain who the German representative will be.

¹ Cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 135.

No. 117

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 17, 1.55 p.m.)
No. 154 Telegraphic [J 2389/84/1]

ROME, March 17, 1936, 1.40 p.m.

In speaking of reported meeting of Committee of Thirteen today Signor Suvich said he . . .¹ little chance of a successful solution if Committee insisted that negotiations were to be under direct and . . .² League supervision and according to an over-rigid set of principles. On the other hand he believed that a settlement might be found if Italian and Ethiopian governments were encouraged to have direct negotiations bringing state of those negotiations from time to time before the League according to progress made.³

¹ The text was here uncertain; 'saw' was suggested on the filed copy.

² The text was here uncertain; 'continuous' was suggested on the filed copy.

³ This telegram encouraged speculation in the Foreign Office as to whether direct or informal negotiation in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute might yield some results. Mr. Scrivener minuted on March 17: 'In a situation in which *any* negotiations must prove excessively difficult, Signor Suvich's hint is perhaps well worth considering.' Sir L. Oliphant, a Deputy Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, commented: 'I cannot imagine any other govts. being prepared to assume this thankless task; or the Emperor agreeing—unless the discussions—alluded to by Mr. Scrivener—have in fact some substance. L. O. 18 Mch.' In a letter of March 21 to the Abyssinian Department of the Foreign Office (J 2528/84/1) the Rome Chancery remarked that 'all indications point to the fact that Mussolini is . . . anxious to conclude a speedy peace . . . It is equally likely that he would prefer to make this known through private channels rather than through Grandi'. This was partly because, as the letter remarked earlier, 'Mussolini has a distinct inclination to employ odd people to make his views known—perhaps because, as you suggest, he can throw them over without the slightest difficulty'. Mr. Eden told the Cabinet on March 16 that the Italian Ambassador, Signor Grandi, 'had indicated a strong desire to try and liquidate the position as regards sanctions on Italy. The latest news from Abyssinia indicated that the situation resulting from the Italian victories was not so bad as the Italians made out.'

No. 118

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)
No. 62 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1984/4/18]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 17, 1936, 2.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 106.¹

Following is reply which I gave early this afternoon to German Ambassador.

'His Majesty's Government are doing and will continue to do their utmost to find means of bringing about a peaceful and satisfactory settlement of the present difficulties. It is clear to His Majesty's Government that the proposals of the Chancellor as well as any proposals made by other parties

¹ No. 116.

concerned must be discussed at the proper time. The German Government will appreciate however that it is not possible for His Majesty's Government to give any more explicit undertaking at this stage.²

² See also *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 138.

No. 119

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 73 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2026/4/18]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 17, 1936, 8.45 p.m.

M. Flandin was today in a very depressed mood, and in a private conversation he spoke in frank and gloomy terms. He said that his mission to London had been a failure. From the first there had been a tendency to class France and Belgium, the injured party, with Germany, the guilty part[y]. It was natural that we should seek to act as mediators, but we had gone too far. The very proposals that His Majesty's Government was now discussing with him¹ were impregnated with this unjust assimilation of guilt and innocence. He would be leaving London on Thursday,² and would leave M. Paul-Boncour to represent him, but he would not return. He would be leaving with a heavy heart, for he considered that the proceedings at the Council during the last few days were conducting the League downhill. He said that the Belgian Prime Minister shared his apprehensions.

M. Flandin further said, without any heat or ill-feeling, that the present meeting was a misfortune not only for the League but for Anglo-French relations. He thought that the latter would suffer in the next French Parliament. He feared that M. Laval and M. Daladier would combine, and endeavour to reach a direct settlement with Germany without us. M. Laval was always urging that it was useless to rely on England, and M. Caillaux of course echoed him. They had both been girding at him—the latter had been on the telephone this morning—but he had always resisted them. Now he feared they would get their way.

M. Flandin has of course been subjected to a very heavy strain here, and some allowance must be made for this fact. Even so, however, his utterances have a grave character, and I must request you to send to me at once by telegram a comprehensive report stating specifically—and quoting the sources on which you rely—how far you consider this appreciation to be warranted by any existing tendencies and valid anticipations.

¹ As in Annex to No. 110.

² March 19.

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 18)

No. 145 Telegraphic [C 1989/4/18]

PARIS, March 17, 1936

The President of the Council was with M. Léger at the Quai d'Orsay when His Majesty's Minister¹ called on him this evening. After M. Sarraut's departure M. Léger telephoned his instructions to M. Massigli in the Minister's presence. The French Government have no objection to the postponement of the Council meeting, if necessary, to enable the German representatives to attend, but they will not authorise M. Flandin to make any other concession as regards the procedure on which they have hitherto insisted. They particularly object to the suggestion that the League Council should be asked to decide what measures should be adopted in view of the German violation of Locarno, a decision which, they maintain, it is the duty of the Locarno Powers themselves to take.

M. Léger was in a very grave and determined mood. He maintained that while he entirely ruled out any military action, the Locarno Powers must take some measure such as a financial sanction as a proof of their determination to resist German aggression.² If they failed to do this, such countries as Italy, Poland and Turkey which were now hesitating would throw in their lot with Germany, convinced that her hegemony in Europe was inevitable, and the Western Powers would eventually have to face a reckoning with a vastly strengthened Reich in circumstances much less favourable than the present. It was impossible to move M. Léger by the arguments which you have used in London, and he terminated the conversation by repeating the words which he had used to M. Massigli 'C'est l'heure de Joffre, où on ne peut plus reculer'.

¹ Mr. H. Lloyd Thomas.

² Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin commented in a minute dated March 18 on this proposal of a financial sanction. He referred to a recent report of the A.T.B. Committee (see No. 135, note 3, below) which had pointed out that financial pressure would have little effect as 'Germany's credit stands very low and it is already impossible for her to borrow'. Germany was able to finance a considerable part of her foreign trade through the Acceptance market in London; the loss of this convenience would not be a decisive factor to Germany, but on the other hand these acceptance and other credits involved £40,000,000 of British money lent by the City to Germany. 'These are covered by the Standstill Agreement [of 1931; see Volume II, No. 258 and p. 490], under which interest is paid regularly, and the Bills constitute good assets in the hands of the holders. The imposition of economic pressure would probably bring the Standstill Agreement to an end and remittances would cease to be made. The financial houses concerned . . . would almost certainly be faced with insolvency unless H.M. Government guaranteed the Bills.' It was certainly possible that in the event of 'financial' sanctions Germany would cease to pay interest under the Standstill Agreement. 'In this event, M. Léger's suggestion of a financial sanction would do more serious damage to this country than to Germany.'

Minute¹ by Sir R. Vansittart

[C 2802/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1936*

What Mr. Sargent says is no doubt true, but the stuff now being spouted in Germany does not stand alone. There was plenty of it before this Rhineland incident, and there will be plenty more of it. It represents very fairly the methods and mentality of those now in power in Germany.

I noticed yesterday generally at the League Council,² and particularly among the members of our own Delegation, a tendency to fear that unless we showed some alacrity in grasping at the German proposals they would evaporate. I hope incidentally that we shall not allow ourselves to be bluffed like that. That, however, is not the point. The point is that if German professions of a desire for a European settlement were really so shallow that they would vanish in a huff and a puff, they would obviously stand self-condemned, and those who give utterance to these apprehensions are in reality the severest critics of present-day Germany.

Whether they are right in these apprehensions only time can show. Nobody of course can take German assurances at their face value if any account be taken of past experience, as it must be taken. Our right course will be to give these professions a trial. Indeed no other course is possible for us. But we must not be taken in by them, because they have little value until they have proved their value, and the real test of Germany's intentions will be, in the future as in the past (as I have often pointed out), whether Germany intends to correct the systematic deformation of the German mind before it is too late. If the Rhineland episode were to bring such a result in its train, it would have been well worth while, but I do not think for a moment that it *will* bring about such a change of heart and education in Germany. Nor evidently does Sir Eric Phipps; nor do our other sources of information. They are in fact with one accord talking of the next item on Germany's menu, and Goering and Goebbels certainly lend every colour to this view by all their recent utterances. Miracles, however, do still come about, and we must continue to hope and work for one, for a miracle is only another form of long odds.

I should say that for the present, possibly even³ for some time to come, the

¹ In this minute Sir R. Vansittart was commenting on a memorandum of March 13 in which Mr. Wigram remarked that large numbers of letters were being received in the Foreign Office 'from private persons in this country urging the Government to accept the "generous" proposals for peace made in the German Government's memorandum of March 7th' (cf. No. 42, note 2), and then quoted recent public statements, mainly by General Goering and Dr. Goebbels, which gave 'a very different picture of German intentions'. Mr. Sargent commented (March 14) that their remarks suggested 'emotional hysteria' rather than 'insincerity' and he noted that 'none of this bravado emanates from Hitler himself, although he has been by no means silent during the last few days'.

² Cf. No. 113.

German triumvirate is sincere in desiring peace in Western Europe. It is somewhat surer that they do not ultimately desire peace in Central and Eastern Europe. And that affects us directly unless we intend to abandon the League and all its principles, a possibility which I exclude. *erase*

The present German offers are in fact the fruit of a desire to efface, or rather to tide over, the possible dangerous convulsions caused by the provocative folly of the method by which they disposed of the demilitarized zone. Nothing that is really going on inside Germany, nothing that is being said or taught there, gives at present any sign of more than that ephemeral sincerity of which we have all along recognised Hitler to be capable. It is in fact his chief characteristic, but it speaks for itself.

To look at the situation in any more *roseate* light than the foregoing is nothing more than inability to recognise unpleasant facts, or ignorance of those facts.³

R. V.

³ The minute was addressed to Mr. Eden, who initialled it on March 21.

No. 122

Minute by Lord Cranborne on British commitments in Europe¹

[C 2086/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1936*

Like everyone else, I have been meditating not only on the immediate way out of the present crisis, but on the implications of it on future British and European policy. What are to be the commitments of this country in Europe? What are to be the commitments of France? How are those commitments to be implemented? For obviously it is of no use to undertake obligations unless it is intended to fulfil them. That is one of the main lessons of the present crisis. We are likely to be asked by the French Government to agree to further assurances, automatic action without a vote of the Council of the League, staff conversations and so on. Why do they want these additional assurances? Presumably in order that England should be compelled to take action under circumstances in which she does not wish to do so, and when her public opinion might not normally support it. What are those circumstances?

In this connection it is desirable to remember that in the period after the war and before the Treaty of Locarno was signed France undertook very wide obligations in Central and Eastern Europe. For the fulfilment of these obligations she may well require our support. We, of course, might not be directly affected by any war which arose in these areas, but France would be

¹ A covering note addressed to Mr. Eden read: 'If you ever have a moment (which is doubtful) could you have a look at this? I believe that Sargent has independently written something on the same lines. C. 17.3.'

affected, and, as a result of a tightening of our obligations to her, we might, ultimately, very easily be dragged in. We ought, therefore, I submit, to walk very warily before we take any irrevocable step. For what is the truth? Without the Demilitarized Zone, France cannot in fact effectively fulfil her obligations in Central and Eastern Europe. We should merely be bolstering up a position which cannot be maintained. M. Avenol himself confessed to me the other night, though obviously he would not wish it to be known, that the remilitarization of the Zone, which he regarded as a *fait accompli*, meant that French obligations in Eastern Europe must eventually be liquidated. This is obviously inevitable. Do we want to delay the process, and to make it possible for France not to face facts? That is doing no kindness to France herself. It is frequently said that France is becoming a second-rate Power. That is not true. What gives colour to the suggestion is that France is at present biting off more than she can chew. If her sphere of influence was limited to Western Europe and Northern Africa, she would remain a great and powerful nation. But she cannot effectively spread her influence further. The great Power of Central Europe must inevitably be Germany.²

It seems to me therefore that our main object must be to stabilise the situation in Western Europe, and give Germany a free hand, in so far as her and our League obligations permit, further east. How is that to be done in the negotiations to which the present crisis are likely eventually to lead? It seems to me that we must divide the political and economic aspects of the problem, and that the political aspect must be considered first. On the political side, Germany has taken the Demilitarized Zone, and offers in exchange her return to the League, and pacts of non-aggression on East, West and South. We ought to try to negotiate on this basis. France will ask us for additional military assurances as a price for her taking part in these negotiations. For reasons which I have already stated, we ought not to give these, at any rate beyond the interim period before the negotiations are completed. There is another reason why we should be chary of doing it. The essence of the German proposal is mutuality. A permanent military alliance with France would destroy the whole idea of mutuality. Western Europe would still be divided into pro-German and anti-German camps. On such a basis no permanent stability can be achieved. It would also be

² In the paper by Mr. Sargent, dated March 16, referred to by Lord Cranborne (see note 1), Mr. Sargent spoke of the possibility that in order 'to induce France to abandon her policy of forcing the German Government to evacuate the Rhineland, H.M. Government may decide to offer to guarantee French territory against German attack', and asked 'whether in order to make such a further and more onerous guarantee of French territory palatable to the British public, we would not have to insist that France should in return free herself of the special obligations she has undertaken in the East, and be content to rely merely on the Covenant; or, failing that, she should accept that we should be entirely free as regards our guarantee in all cases where the German attack on France arose out of a dispute in the East into which France had been drawn as a result of her Eastern Treaties, present and future . . . In a word, if we are to give France an automatic guarantee, we must have a "droit de regard" over French foreign policy in Europe. The British public will demand this . . .' Sir R. Vansittart minuted on March 16: 'We will speak of this a little further hence. We could not of course ask France to sever her Eastern connections.'

desirable, in this first negotiation, to take the step of separating the Covenant from the Treaty of Versailles. The present position is quite indefensible, and is a constant cause of friction.

The second stage in the discussions, which might be postponed till a little later, would be entirely devoted to the economic aspect of the problem. In a very interesting letter which Mr. Harold Butler has written to Sir Horace Wilson, the point is clearly made that Germany at the present moment cannot afford to slacken her production of armaments, for to do so would create such widespread unemployment and misery as would almost certainly bring about the collapse of the present régime.³ We want above all things a reduction or even a limitation of German armaments, but we cannot achieve this unless we provide some outlet for the products of German civil industry. This might be done by giving her, economically, a freer hand in Central Europe, by a loan, or in other ways. The question of the colonies, too, might be brought up in this discussion. But the main thing is that these questions should be discussed freely and openly, on equal terms, round a table.

The great advantage of this procedure is that there would be in it something for everyone. The Germans could be told, during the first stage, that it was to be followed by a free and frank discussion of their economic difficulties. The French could have it pointed out to them that the purpose of these economic discussions would be to lead to a limitation of German armaments, which would give them additional and substantial security.

Do not let us, at any rate, in order to find a way out of the present emergency, put ourselves under definite obligations of which we do not know

³ Mr. H. B. Butler, C.B., was Director of the International Labour Office at Geneva, 1932-8. In a letter of March 11 to Sir H. Wilson, Industrial Adviser to the Prime Minister, a copy of which was forwarded to Sir R. Vansittart on March 13, Mr. Butler reported conversations with Dr. Schacht and M. Quesnay, Secretary General of the Bank of International Settlements, from which he had derived the strong impression that Germany's grave financial situation was 'one of the principal motives' behind the remilitarization of the Rhineland and that, according to M. Quesnay, 'we now had the first chance since the war of straightening out the whole European situation and ensuring economic revival'. Mr. Butler subsequently sent to both Sir H. Wilson and Mr. Eden copies of a memorandum entitled 'The Problem of Raw Materials in Germany'. In his covering letter of March 14 to Mr. Eden he suggested that it was 'impossible for Germany to maintain her level of production, and therefore employment, very much longer. So far Schacht has succeeded in doing this by a series of *tours de force*, but the end is now apparently in sight. My own belief is that Hitler's offer was genuine, although it means a reversal of the greater part of his previous foreign policy, and that the reoccupation of the Rhineland was devised principally as a counter-weight to induce German public opinion to swallow the change. If, as I strongly hope, negotiations take place, they ought not to be limited to the political field. It is on the economic side that Germany is most in need of assistance and is therefore weakest. It is also on that side where the decisive voice will lie with Great Britain.' Opinion in the Foreign Office on Mr. Butler's views was mixed. Mr. F. Ashton-Gwatkin wrote that 'Mr. Butler's Memo. puts in a rather different form what we have been saying for some time' (March 28). Sir R. Vansittart thought it 'silly' to say that the reoccupation of the Rhineland was designed by Hitler 'to sweeten peace to his people . . . we all know the exact contrary to be the case' (April 6).

the final implications. It seems to me that there is a real danger that the relations of England, France and Belgium, as a result of the present crisis, may come to be defined on an entirely false basis. What, after all, is the true relationship of the three countries? *It is not one of mutual obligation. It is one of mutual interest.* We cannot afford to allow a hostile Power to cross the frontiers of Belgium and France. If we once can make that clear to the world, rigid obligations, which may be called into play as a result of events outside the area to which those obligations were meant to bring security, should be entirely unnecessary. The obligations of the Treaty of Locarno have, owing to the dispute as to their true interpretation, only served to increase that misunderstanding and lack of confidence which they were framed to avoid. Let us not make the same mistake again.⁴

C.

⁴ A minute by Mr. Eden read: 'Thank you. There is much force in this, but I do not think it tells quite the whole story. A. E. 18th March.' In a minute addressed to Mr. Eden, Sir R. Vansittart wrote, with reference to Lord Cranborne's minute: 'I have written a note on this and also had a talk with Lord Cranborne. I agree of course as to the need for caution in our commitments. That point is of immediate moment, and there is no divergence between us. Where I differed was on the long range policy—unless there was a great change in the situation. But, after our discussion, I don't think that here either there is any real divergence in our views. R. V. March 18.'

No. 123

Minute by Mr. Wigram

[C 2443/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1936*

M. Massigli has just telephoned in a state of great excitement.

He said that M. Flandin had told him to make a preliminary examination of the paper communicated this morning¹ and that on this examination he considers the situation very grave.

He said that our paper treats France exactly like Germany; and that there is nothing left of Article 4 of the Treaty of Locarno. If the British assistance due to France is to be reduced to the voting of a Resolution, it would be better if we said so at once.

He asked what would happen if Germany refused the invitation to refer to the Court.

He repeated that it would be better to know at once that Locarno did not exist and that the British Government would do nothing.

He said that we were going towards catastrophe and 'des conclusions terribles' and to 'calamité'.

R. F. WIGRAM

¹ Embodying the proposals in the Annex to No. 110: cf. No. 119.

No. 124

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 502 [C 2019/4/18]

Most Confidential

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1936*

Sir,

On receipt of telegram No. 106¹ from Berlin I asked to see Monsieur Flandin and gave him the text of the German telegram and of my proposed reply.² Monsieur Flandin made a slight amendment which I accepted. I told the French Foreign Minister that I proposed to give the reply to the German Ambassador as soon as I had shown it to Monsieur van Zeeland. I would urge upon the Ambassador that if the reply was acceptable to the German Government then the German delegation should arrive as soon as possible, for the Council had already had too many adjournments. Pending receipt of a final German reply I agreed that we could not be expected further to delay the proceedings of the Council.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

¹ No. 116.

² See No. 118.

No. 125

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 337 [C 2020/4/18]

Most Confidential

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1936*

Sir,

On my return from my interview with Monsieur Flandin described in my despatch No. 502¹ to Paris, I asked the German Ambassador to come and see me.

2. I read to His Excellency the text of the message which I had received in Berlin telegram No. 106.² I then read to him the reply which I proposed to send.³ I further told the Ambassador that if the German Government, on receipt of this reply, were willing to send a representative, I hoped they would do so without any delay. It should be possible for him to arrive tomorrow afternoon. It was really not reasonable, as I felt sure he would appreciate, to keep asking the Council to adjourn pending the arrival of the German delegation.

3. The Ambassador replied that he would do his best to hasten the arrival of the German representative if it was decided to send one, but he much regretted the last sentence of my reply which seemed to him to be regrettably negative. Was it not possible to modify the text to avoid this impression?

¹ No. 124.

² No. 116.

³ See No. 118.

I replied that I had carefully considered the text and I regretted that I could not make any amendment to it. I also told the Ambassador that I did not like the idea of communications passing between him and us which were not also made known to my colleagues on the Council. In these circumstances I proposed to make known the text of these two messages to the Council in secret session this afternoon.

4. The Ambassador replied that he fully appreciated the position and he would at once telephone to Berlin and hoped that he might even be able to tell me by the time of the Council meeting whether or not Germany would accept the invitation extended to her.

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 126

Mr. R. T. Smallbones¹ (Frankfort-on-Main) to Mr. Eden

(Received March 18)

No. 11 [C 2015/4/18]

FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN, March 17, 1936

Sir,

On Saturday morning it was given out that Monday the 16th, the day of the anniversary of the day on which Germany announced her intention to re-introduce conscription,² would be celebrated as a public holiday and shops and banks were to be closed. The troops stationed here were to be reviewed by General Blomberg³ on the parade ground in the Eastern suburbs of the town in the morning; the Mainz garrison was to be inspected by him in the afternoon and I gather that similar parades were to take place at Coblenz and Cologne. On Monday evening military tat[t]oos were to take place. It was apparently decided on Saturday afternoon not to hold these parades. This decision may have been intended as a conciliatory gesture or it may have been dictated by the fear that this military display might be interpreted as an assembling of troops specifically mentioned in the Locarno Treaty. The military tattoos were not cancelled. As the term military tattoo, which is the equivalent of the German word 'Zapfenstreich', conveys to the English mind a spectacular military show I suggested to the Lord Mayor of Frankfort, with whom I am well acquainted, that it would be as well to cancel the tattoos also. I made it quite clear that I was speaking on my own initiative and without any instructions. He explained that the tattoo was no more than a military, open-air concert which would be attended only by a small detachment of soldiers.

2. Herr Hitler held a meeting in the 'Festhalle' at night which was atten-

¹ Mr. Smallbones had been British Consul-General at Frankfort since October 18, 1932.

² See Volume XII, No. 570.

³ General Werner von Blomberg had been Reich War Minister since May 1, 1935.

ded by about 30,000 people. I had received an invitation and was present. On the platform were Generals von Blomberg and von Fritsch, Admiral Raeder and General Göring. Herr Hitler's speech was essentially a repetition of those he has made during the last few days at Karlsruhe and at Munich. A summary of the speech does therefore not appear to be indicated in this report.⁴ I gather that Reuter's agency at Berlin had the speech taken down verbatim and full summaries will be available at the Foreign Office before this despatch is received. The phrases which brought down the house were when Herr Hitler said that he desired to ask the German people: 'Do you wish and are you prepared to bury the hatchet with France? Do you wish to draw a line under the past and close the account of wars and enmity?' The audience yelled themselves hoarse: 'Yes' and 'We are'.

3. He said that he was not a huckster and that the offer he had made was the maximum he was prepared to go to. He repeated that he was not prepared to make any gestures by which presumably he meant that he was not prepared to withdraw any troops from the de-militarized zone and, if I caught the phrase correctly, he said that he 'would not give up any rights of sovereignty even at the bidding of England'. He probably meant that he would not waive the right to fortify the de-militarized zone.

4. I have not seen Herr Hitler for some years on a platform and I may be permitted to record my impressions, for what they are worth, of the change which has come over him and which to my mind is most marked. His bearing and his very features seem to have become more refined and more gentlemanly. The truculence has gone from his eyes and he smiles and nods benignly. His hands which used to look squat and grasping have turned white and emaciated. He used to hold on to the table before him with an iron grip but now the fingers hardly look for support and they flutter gently in the air to explain, as it were, a point; gone is the continual thumping of the table and, while the old fire has not left him, the most violent gesture is a smart slap of the clenched right hand into the open palm of the left. May I venture the conjecture that these outward manifestations denote a spiritual change and that the man of 'Mein Kampf' has become the convinced advocate of an era of peace for at least twenty five years.

5. I gather that severe precautions were taken to safeguard Herr Hitler. The time and method of his arrival were not made known and large crowds were waiting at the railway station to see him while he landed at the aerodrome. His route through the poorer quarters, where communists live, was lined three deep by S.A. and S.S. men. In the hall itself the precautions taken appeared to me inadequate. The rostrum projected far out into the hall and he was an easy target with no body guard close at hand. I was under the impression that he wore a mail shirt below his tunic.

As there is a safe opportunity for transmitting a bag to London today, I

⁴ A fairly full account of this speech of March 16 is given in *The Times* of March 17, 1936, p. 16. See also Norman H. Baynes (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, op. cit.*, p. 1310. *The Times* for March 16 gives a full report (p. 11) of Herr Hitler's first 'election' speech, delivered in Munich on March 14. Cf. No. 105, note 2.

have been instructed by His Majesty's Ambassador to address this report to the Foreign Office; spare copies for Sir Eric Phipps are enclosed herewith.⁵

I have, &c.,
R. T. SMALLBONES

⁵ In a comment on this despatch Mr. Wigram remarked: 'This is a picturesque account. Para 4 is certainly a risky statement. R. F. W. 18/3.'

No. 127

*Letter from Mr. I. Kirkpatrick¹ (Berlin) to Mr. Wigram
(Received March 18)
[C 2045/4/18]*

BERLIN, March 17, 1936

My dear Wigs,

I see from the German press that the translation of the word 'alsbald' in the German reply to Avenol by the English word 'forthwith'² is being criticised and the 'Völkischer Beobachter' attributes the murkiest motives to the League translator.

I am afraid I was responsible for *our* translation. (The Ambassador here interposes that he approved it). I relied on Cassell's dictionary which is supported by other books we have here. Bellows translates it as 'directly, immediately, forthwith'. A German work called 'The Dictionary of the German Language' by Dr. Daniel Sanders says: 'usually as adverb = immediately, at once (sogleich, sofort)'. Another German dictionary issued recently by Brockhaus of Leipzig gives the meaning as 'at once, immediately (sofort, gleich)'.

Moreover the note explained that Hitler's action must be considered as a unity and that the parts could not be separated. This seems to conflict slightly with the theory now advanced that the Germans would be prepared to discuss the breach of Locarno now, leaving the question of Hitler's concrete proposals over for discussion at a later date.

A Bavarian says that the use of the word is a Bavarianism and means that the negotiations should be started as soon as the first point was out of the way. He regards it as proof of the fact that Hitler drafted or had a hand in the reply.

Silex says that it is a rotten word anyhow!

Yours ever,
I. KIRKPATRICK

¹ First Secretary in H.M. Embassy at Berlin.

² Cf. No. 108, note 2.

No. 128

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 18, 12.30 p.m.)

No. 109 Telegraphic [C 2029/4/18]

BERLIN, March 18, 1936, 12.30 p.m.

Herr von Ribbentrop I believe strongly supported occupation of Rhineland and even told Chancellor that it would be warmly welcomed in England. He is convinced that vast majority of British people are pro-German, and that Foreign Office and British Embassy, Berlin, are the unfortunate and rare exceptions.

It would therefore be highly desirable that Herr von Ribbentrop should, during his stay in England,¹ be brought into touch with as many of the sensible public as possible from all parties. Persons I mean who will not foolishly flatter him but who will confirm that British desire for friendship with Germany, though real, is contingent upon a strict observance of the latter's engagements and a renunciation of force in future.

Herr von Ribbentrop is the only member of the Nazi party who goes abroad and has foreign friends and he is therefore the man who has most influence over foreign policy of the Chancellor. Unfortunately he has no moral courage and merely flatters the latter to the top of his bent and tells him what he wishes to hear.

¹ Herr von Ribbentrop came to London as German delegate to the League Council meeting; cf. No. 116.

No. 129

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 18, 7.40 p.m.)

No. 146 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2048/4/18]

PARIS, March 18, 1936

Your telegram No. 73.¹

At this moment when the attitude of almost every public man in this country towards the international situation is influenced by considerations of internal politics and when one has to reckon with so many cross-currents of opinion such as those engendered by the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, it is not easy with confidence to estimate the true state of public opinion or to foretell the effect of the present crisis on the future of Anglo-French relations, but after conversations with politicians of different parties and study of the recent speeches and writings of the leaders of political thought I have come to the conclusion that the policy of M. Sarraut's government has rather outrun public opinion. There has certainly been a slight stiffening of the French attitude during the last two days, but on the whole I have been struck by the moderate tone of the press and the absence of violence in public

¹ No. 119.

utterances and private conversations. The bitterest criticism of the policy of His Majesty's Government has come from the London correspondents of newspapers, whose leader writers in Paris are much more objective and reasonable. There is no doubt however that recent developments in London have imposed a certain strain on Anglo-French relations, and that we shall have to bear the blame for any concessions that the French may have to make. We are already being accused of trying to wriggle out of our Locarno obligations, and I am afraid that we must reckon with the probability that these accusations will become bitterer and more violent, unless France receives some guarantee to replace the security which she will have lost with the disappearance of the Rhineland Pact. In fact we may expect that no opportunity will be allowed to pass of accusing us of having let France down rather than face the consequences of what are unanimously regarded here as our treaty obligations. The French people as a whole do not want war, or drastic measures entailing the risk of war, and they would be prepared for any reasonable concessions as regards negotiations with Germany and so forth, if these concessions were offset by some guarantee of security, in the shape of a formal re-affirmation of the Locarno guarantees, a reconstruction of the Stresa front, or of course a defensive alliance between the Western Powers.

I do not know what M. Caillaux² said to M. Flandin yesterday but he has this morning published in the 'République' an article emphasising the need for negotiation with Germany and eventual concessions to the losers of the last war in the shape of revision of treaties.³ These views I know to be shared by MM. Bérenger, Bastid, the Chairman of the two Foreign Affairs Commissions, and by politicians of the Right such as M. Paul Reynaud and M. Germain-Martin.

As regards M. Laval, what he has always urged—at least in private conversation—is that it is useless to rely on England, and he has toyed and is probably still toying with the idea of a direct settlement between France and Germany; but as has been pointed out in despatches from this Embassy no Franco-German economic deal to our detriment is practicable and now that the Germans have taken the demilitarized zone there is very little left which the French can contribute to political agreement. Should M. Laval return to power, which he well may do in the near future, we shall have to count with this antipathy, and he certainly will not spare us, if French aspirations are disappointed. If we have been unable to offer France any substitute for Locarno, the effect on Anglo-French relations may then be disastrous.

The parties of the Left are far more intransigent than those of the Centre and Right,⁴ and as M. Sarraut depends on the support of the Left there is

² M. Joseph Caillaux, the prominent French Radical Deputy.

³ In a minute of March 19 Mr. Wigram remarked that 'M. Caillaux has now repudiated this article, but he may have done this for tactical reasons . . .'

⁴ Commenting on this statement on March 19, Mr. Sargent remarked that there was no doubt 'a difference of opinion between the different sections, and that the Daladier section

no doubt that there has been very little elasticity in his instructions to M. Flandin—see my telegram No. 145 of March 17th.⁵ On the other hand I do not think that public opinion is quite so averse to concession—subject to the conditions set forth above—as he represents it to be.⁶

is more or less in favour of negotiation. But I presume that what the Embassy have in mind is the personal position of Herriot and the extreme Left, who are of course in the pockets of the Bolsheviks and are playing the Russian game, no doubt with the help of Russian money. But the general impression of these reports is that M. Flandin has been exaggerating the political feeling in France . . .’

⁵ No. 120.

⁶ In a minute of March 19 commenting generally on this telegram, Sir R. Vansittart wrote that it would have been more useful earlier, but that it was ‘interesting as showing that we have been on the right lines here from the start . . . I think the position is about this: M. Flandin wd. have been largely right in his gloom, if we had failed to get along together as far as we have. My own apprehensions, on a long range view, have been largely dissipated by the events of today. As it is, we shall no doubt get a good deal of attack from these very mixed forces. But it will not be enough, I hope & think, to cause us any serious anxiety. There is a very adequate body of opinion in France that thinks we are right.’ The telegram and minutes were seen by Mr. Eden. See No. 144 below.

No. 130

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 74¹ Telegraphic [C 2039/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1936*

My telegram No. 72.²

At private session of Council yesterday afternoon³ President stated that no reply had been received from the German Government to the Secretary-General’s telegram of March 16th.

The Council then went into secret session and I informed the Members of the exchange of messages which I had had with the German Government in the morning (Berlin telegram No. 106⁴ and my telegram No. 62 to Berlin⁵). The German Government’s message was that they expected that His Majesty’s Government would do their utmost in the circumstances of the case to bring about at the proper time a discussion with the interested Powers of the German proposals. His Majesty’s Government had replied that they were doing, and would continue to do, their utmost to find a means of bringing about a peaceful and satisfactory settlement of the present difficulties. It was clear to His Majesty’s Government that the proposals of the Chancellor as well as any proposals made by other parties concerned must be discussed at the proper time. The German Government would appreciate,

¹ No. 11 Saving to Berlin, No. 19 Saving to Rome, No. 6 Saving to Brussels.

² No. 113.

³ Held at St. James’s Palace, London, at 5.45 p.m.; the President was Mr. S. M. Bruce (Australia).

⁴ No. 116.

⁵ No. 118.

however, that it was not possible for His Majesty's Government to give any more explicit assurance at this stage.

The Council then decided that in the absence of an official reply from the German Government they would proceed immediately with the general discussion.

During the discussion of procedure a message was brought in stating that the German delegation would leave Berlin to attend the Council meeting and would arrive in London on Thursday.

The Council then suspended its meeting in order that its members might informally discuss the situation among themselves. The President meanwhile saw the German Ambassador. He explained the feeling of the Council that no further delay should occur and asked the Ambassador to be present as an observer of the committee's proceedings or, if that was not possible, to expedite the arrival of the German delegation.⁶

At the resumed secret session the President gave an account of his interview with Herr von Hoesch, and after some discussion the Council decided to continue the general debate in public session, but in any event to defer its vote on the Franco-Belgian resolution until the German delegation had arrived.

A public session was then held at which the President gave an account of his interview with Herr von Hoesch.

The Turkish representative (Monsieur Aras)⁷ then explained his view of the Council's function in dealing with this question. The primary function of the Council at the moment was that of an arbitrator, but it had also two other functions, that of a mediator in international disputes and that of a guarantor of security.

The Soviet representative (M. Litvinov) attacked the German position in a long and vehement speech in the course of which he criticized the German peace proposals.

The Chilean representative (Don Agustin Edwards)⁸ explained his Government's view of the legal situation. The violation of Article 43 of the Versailles Treaty was not disputed by Germany and was not subject to any legal doubt. But the breach of the Locarno Treaty was disputed. His Government considered that the Council should first take an advisory opinion on this point from the Permanent Court, failing which Chile would abstain from voting on the question of whether or not the Treaty of Locarno had been violated.⁹

The general debate will be continued today.

⁶ See *L/N.O.J., op. cit.*, pp. 318-19.

⁷ Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

⁸ Chilean Ambassador in London.

⁹ The full texts of the speeches of M. Rüstü Aras, M. Litvinov, and Señor Edwards at this public session of the Council are printed in *L/N.O.J., op. cit.*, pp. 319-24.

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 76¹ Telegraphic [C 2068/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1936*

My telegram No. 69.²

Following is record of two further informal discussions between Ministers of four Locarno Powers yesterday morning and last night.

At the outset Monsieur Flandin produced and read to us the text of the French proposals.³

Monsieur Flandin then commented upon the text of his proposals, remarking in particular that we would observe that the French Government had gone a long way to meet our point of view since they did not now ask for the complete evacuation of the Rhineland by Germany as a preliminary to negotiation. We remarked that it would naturally be necessary to be allowed some little time for the study of the text of the French proposals before pronouncing upon them; at the same time we felt bound to make a preliminary observation to the effect that we thought that the proposals as they stood were hardly in matter or in form such as we could endorse in a belief that we should be able to make progress towards an international settlement. We added that, from a first reading, several of the phrases in the paper were such as would be regarded by Germany as in the nature of a *dictat* and that therefore, if the Locarno Powers other than Germany were to agree upon them, we must expect the same attitude from Germany as that country had previously adopted in similar conditions. Belgian Prime Minister then remarked that in his view the text did show marked concessions by the French from their original point of view. At the same time he admitted that there was some force in the criticism that here and there the wording was not happy. No doubt Monsieur Flandin would, however, be willing to consider any amendments in this connexion. Monsieur Flandin immediately stated that he would be very glad to do so. He attached no particular significance to the form in which his statement was made and was prepared to examine any amendments which might be suggested.

We then turned to consider the United Kingdom draft.⁴ We explained to the Locarno Powers that we had sought in this draft to do something to meet the position of France and Belgium in each of the three stages. For the first stage there was the *constatation* and the reference to the Hague Court; for the second, i.e. that pending negotiation, there was a re-affirmation of Locarno and the suggestion of an international force, in which this country would probably have the greater share; and for the third stage there was the creation of a new system of security which would consist of non-aggression pacts for the Western Powers with Germany, together with a super-structure

¹ No. 29 to Brussels, No. 81 to Rome, No. 63 to Berlin.

² No. 109.

³ Communicated by M. Flandin on March 17, and filed at C 1962/4/18, not printed.

⁴ Annex to No. 110.

consisting of a pact of mutual assistance which would be open to Germany, but which would be negotiated between England, France and Belgium whether Germany entered into the scheme or not. The French delegation appreciated the importance of this departure from the previous position of successive British Governments on this subject. Monsieur Flandin remarked that, while he appreciated the significance of the international force, this was different in form from his conception of it since in our paper it would be stationed in both countries. He wondered whether it would not be possible to give France some additional security for the intervening period—after all the negotiations might never take place. Could we not examine the possibility of having Staff conversations during the period which preceded negotiation of the new pacts? This would do much to steady French opinion. We explained to Monsieur Flandin that the object of the international force was precisely to give that sense of security which we thought would thus be given more effectively than by Staff conversations.

In conclusion both Delegations agreed that they would further examine each other's papers and see what progress they could make in conciliating each other's points of view. In particular, the Belgian Prime Minister was asked to prepare a paper for that end. It was agreed that the Delegations would meet again last night to attempt to reach agreement upon a text. Monsieur Flandin remarked as he left that he thought our two points of view were not in truth so very far apart though there was naturally a difference in presentation, owing to the different points of view of our two public opinions.

The further meeting of the Locarno Powers was held at the Foreign Office at 10 p.m. last night continuing until 12.30 this morning.

We opened the proceedings by asking M. van Zeeland to be good enough to give us the text which he had prepared as a result of the agreement reached at the morning meeting.⁵ This M. van Zeeland did, reading to us the text of each Article. Some general discussion then took place from which it emerged that there were three main points of difference. First, as to the method of restoring international law by some action in respect of the demilitarised zone. Our proposal for an international force on both sides of the frontier was declared by Monsieur Flandin to be unacceptable to him, he could agree either to a Franco-Italian force in France as evidence of support of the guarantor Powers or to an international force in the zone only. The second difficulty was the letter which the French and Belgian Governments wished His Majesty's Government to address to them as to the steps which we would take, including financial, economic and military sanctions in the event of Germany's refusal to accept the terms offered to her. The third difficulty lay in the attitude of the French and Belgian Governments to the suggestion that Germany should go to the Hague Court. They argued that both parties must bind themselves in advance to accept the decision of the Court. In the event of that judgement going against France, the Franco-Soviet Pact must be annulled; in the event of it going against Germany Locarno must come into force with all its provisions.

⁵ Filed at C 2028/4/18, not printed.

At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed that M. van Zeeland's text should be further examined by the other Delegations and the conversations would be resumed later in the morning.

Repeated to Moscow No. 37, Warsaw No. 26, Bucharest No. 37, Belgrade No. 34, Prague No. 33, Angora No. 58, Washington No. 87, The Hague No. 4 Saving.

No. 132

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 77¹ Telegraphic [C 2069/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1936, 11 p.m.*

My telegram No. 76.²

Following is record of further informal discussion between Ministers of four Locarno Powers held between noon and 3.30 p.m. to-day.³

We went through the text put forward by the Belgian Prime Minister last night.⁴ The main, though by no means the only, difficult points raised were four.

First for the interim period pending negotiations both the French and Belgian Governments are insistent that military conversations should take place between the Locarno Powers in view of the violation of the Treaty. We reserved this point for further consideration until after the question of an international force had been discussed.

Secondly the Hague Court. As to this, the French delegates insisted that if the Court was to find against Germany then the Locarno Treaty must be restored in its entirety. We pointed out that this meant that if Germany were to accept to go to the Court and the verdict went against her, then she would be expected to leave the zone. It was unlikely enough that Germany would consent to go to the Court in any event, but on such terms it seemed to us inevitable that she would refuse. Moreover, if such a decision were reached by the Court it was clear that Germany would refuse to withdraw from the zone, and how could she be compelled to go? The French delegates, however, persisted in their attitude.

We then discussed the international force, and we agreed that we should endeavour to persuade the German Government to accept an international force for the zone itself. This the French and Belgian delegates maintained would considerably ease their attitude.

Finally we examined the text of a letter which the French and Belgian Governments wished us to address to them. By the terms of this we were

¹ No. 30 to Brussels, No. 83 to Rome, No. 64 to Berlin.

² No. 131.

³ According to an official *communiqué* the meeting began at 12.30 p.m. There was a short interval for a light lunch at the Foreign Office.

⁴ See No. 131, note 5.

asked to undertake that in the event of failure of negotiation we would carry out our Locarno obligations to the full, including military, naval and aerial action. Belgian Prime Minister suggested that this letter might be kept secret between us. We stated that a secret letter was impossible, and in this the French supported us. We also maintained that we could not sign any letter drawn up in such terms. Its effect on the Germans could only be to make them refuse to enter negotiations at all. Moreover, was it really suggested that we should say to the Germans 'Either you will accept this, or there will be war'? M. Flandin strongly contested the statement that sanctions meant war. In the face of the recent experience he thought it quite impossible to maintain such an attitude. If the League would not carry out its duty now, then it was the end of the League, and in any case France could not continue sanctions against Italy if they were not imposed against Germany. We refused to discuss the latter point in the presence of the Italian delegate, and stated that in our view there was no analogy. Leaving out of account the obligations of the Locarno Powers, the members of the League had no obligation under the Covenant to enforce sanctions in this instance. Moreover, the League had never visualized military sanctions such as were now contemplated. How could military sanctions be enforced without war?

M. Flandin replied that he did not visualize military sanctions. What he had in mind was a financial sanction milder than that applied against Italy, and possibly the refusal to allow German ships to come to the ports of the Locarno Powers. We pointed out to M. Flandin that his text went far beyond this. M. Flandin said that he had done his utmost to meet our point of view in the conversation. There was a point, however, beyond which he could not go, and he was bound to tell us that if we could not accept this letter or something like it he feared that agreement would be impossible and he would have no choice but to go back to Paris.⁵

⁵ Following the adjournment of these discussions at 3.30 p.m. on March 18, Mr. Eden gave the Cabinet a detailed account of the proceedings at a meeting which began at 6.30 p.m. the same day and lasted for a little over an hour. He said that 'the situation would be eased if we could agree to military conversations', but several members reminded the Cabinet that conversations on the lines of M. van Zeeland's most recent proposals 'would be very unacceptable to public opinion in this country which was strongly opposed to any forcible action to compel the Germans to evacuate the Demilitarized Zone. Moreover, we were not in a position to give effective military support in any such operation as the French were well aware.' The Cabinet's views on the points of difference that had arisen in the discussions were summed up as follows in the minutes of this meeting:

- (a) The Lord Privy Seal's proposal for the stationing of an International Force, including British troops, in the Demilitarised Zone and for British and Italian forces on the French side of the Frontier, was welcomed.
- (b) The proposed letter to the French and Belgian Governments as to our action in the event of Germany's refusal to accept the terms offered to her, was rejected in any of the forms that had been mentioned at the Cabinet.
- (c) The difficulty as to the attitudes of the French and Belgian Governments to the suggestion that Germany should go to the Hague Court had been solved by M. van Zeeland's latest communication.
- (d) Military conversations must be strictly limited to mutual arrangements for defence in

Repeated to Moscow No. 38, Warsaw No. 27, Bucharest No. 38, Belgrade No. 35, Prague No. 34, Angora No. 60, Washington No. 88, The Hague No. 10.

the event of German aggression against France or Belgium during the period of negotiation, and this would have to be made unmistakably clear in any announcement to the British public.'

Without opposing the general line as summed up above, Mr. Eden warned the Cabinet that negotiations on this basis were liable to break down that night.

The discussion between the Ministers of the four Locarno powers was resumed at 10 p.m. that evening, and continued until 2 a.m. on March 19.

No. 133

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 19)

No. 57 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2052/99/18]

BERLIN, March 18, 1936

My telegram Saving No. 56.¹

I learn from various first-hand sources that the supply of food and numerous important raw materials in Germany would not suffice for a military campaign of more than a few months' duration, if even for so long. In the opinion of responsible business men here General Goering is merely bluffing when he descends to threats.

¹ In this telegram of March 18 Sir E. Phipps quoted from a speech by General Goering at Dortmund on March 17 in support of Herr Hitler's 'election' campaign. He said that 'the 29th March would show that the Chancellor was speaking in the name of the whole German people and acting in their name when he abolished the demilitarized zone'; that Germany 'would make herself independent of sanctions'; that for three years 'they had worked like slaves to rearm themselves'; and that if attacked, 'Germany would arise as one man to defend itself and thousands of Frenchmen would have to die for every centimetre of German ground'.

No. 134

Report by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the C.I.D.

[C 2608/4/18]

2 WHITEHALL GARDENS, S.W.1, March 18, 1936

The Condition of our Forces to meet the possibility of War with Germany

In view of the gravity of the position resulting from the German occupation of the Demilitarised Zone, we met on the 12th March, 1936, without instructions but with the knowledge and approval of the Prime Minister, to examine the military aspects of the situation. We subsequently directed the Joint Planning Sub-Committee to review the condition of our forces and

to render a Report at once on the existing position of our defence forces at Home and the possible improvements which could be achieved by mobilization either with or without at the same time being relieved of our present extra responsibilities in the Mediterranean. Their Report, as amended and approved by us, is attached to this Memorandum.¹

2. We realise that the main object of the Government's policy is to avoid any risk of war with Germany. In case, however, there is the smallest risk, either now or later in the negotiations, that we might be drawn into such a war, we wish to offer the following observations.

3. The attached Report gives the facts regarding the forces at our disposal in certain circumstances, and we would at once emphasise, as is obvious from those facts, that any question of war with Germany while we were as at present heavily committed to the possibility of hostilities in the Mediterranean would be thoroughly dangerous. As regards naval operations against Germany, our minimum requirements could only be carried out by weakening naval forces in the Mediterranean to an extent which would jeopardise our position there vis-à-vis Italy. Even so, there would not be sufficient naval forces available to ensure that we could safeguard our coasts or trade against serious depredations of the German Fleet, small as it is. As regards the Army and the Air Force, the purely defensive provisions already made in the Mediterranean have drawn upon the resources of these two Services to such an extent that until those reinforcements have returned to this country we should be quite incapable of despatching a Field Force or providing any proper defence in the air. To bring Home these forces with their equipment, reserves of ammunition and the like would take in the case of the Army two months after the orders for withdrawal are given, and even longer in the case of the Air Force.

4. We also draw attention to the fact that the provision of equipment for the defence of our coasts and ports at Home has to date, with the consent of the Government, been placed in the lowest category of importance, and it is only with the approval of the new programme for the reconditioning of the forces that a serious start is being made to rectify matters in this direction. At the moment our coast defence artillery requires modernisation to a large extent, we have no anti-submarine defences for a number of our most important ports, and the number of our anti-aircraft guns and searchlights is quite inadequate to deal with the air threat from Germany. Even if the reserves of ammunition at present in the Mediterranean were withdrawn, the situation would be little improved.

5. The modified naval position in the Mediterranean discussed in the attached Report involving the adoption of a strict defensive may be feasible but not, in our opinion, a proper strategical step to take. It would leave Italian naval forces free to operate in the Central Mediterranean and would probably discourage other Mediterranean Powers from co-operation in the event of hostilities. In any case, even with this modified naval policy, the present army and air forces in the Mediterranean must remain if there is any

¹ See Enclosure below.

danger to be anticipated from Italy and, consequently, there would be little improvement in the position at Home.

6. Therefore, if there is the smallest danger of being drawn into commitments which might lead to war with Germany, we ought at once to disengage ourselves from our present responsibilities in the Mediterranean, which have exhausted practically the whole of our meagre forces. Even then, a considerable period of time must elapse, varying from two to four months as regards the Army and the Air Force, before those forces will be re-established at Home.

7. In the absence of instructions we are not submitting any definite proposals, but we feel that the information in this Memorandum and in the attached Report ought to be available to the Government.

ERNLE CHATFIELD

A. A. MONTGOMERY-MASSINGBERD

E. L. ELLINGTON²

ENCLOSURE IN No. 134

Report³ of the Joint Planning Sub-Committee

Introduction

The Chiefs of Staff at their meeting⁴ held on the 12th March, 1936, directed the Joint Planning Sub-Committee to review the position and to prepare a Report in fairly general terms setting forth

- (i) the existing position of our defence forces at Home;
- (ii) the improvement which would result from mobilization;
- (iii) the effects if, in addition, the Services were relieved of their present extra responsibilities in the Mediterranean.

2. We have, in particular, considered our position, under the three headings given above, as regards the Air Defence of Great Britain, the possible despatch of an Expeditionary Force overseas, the defence of trade and defence against sporadic bombardment of our coasts. We have dealt also with the amount of naval support likely to be available from France.

Present Position of the Defence Forces at Home

3. At the present moment our dispositions are directed against the possibility of a war with Italy in the Mediterranean, and our naval and air forces at Home are denuded to an extent almost unparalleled in the past. The despatch of military reinforcing units to Egypt has resulted in a situation which will prevent us from sending overseas any further formations of any kind without mobilization.

² First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Chief of the Air Staff respectively.

³ As amended and approved by the Chiefs of Staff at their 168th Meeting held on March 17, 1936; see No. 194 below.

⁴ Note in original: C.O.S./166th Meeting Minute 1.

4. The present positions [*sic*] in more detail as regards each of the Defence Services is as follows.

Navy

5. The only naval forces immediately available in Home Waters are
- 1 6-inch Cruiser (48 hours' notice),
 - 17 Destroyers, of which only 4 are modern vessels, and
 - 9 Submarines (3-7 days' notice).

Without mobilization or withdrawal of ships from the Mediterranean no other forces can be made available, except a further 5 destroyers and 1 submarine, which could be ready in about a week.

6. It is clear from the above that we have at present no naval forces in Home waters which could take any effective action to protect our trade routes or to prevent German forces bombarding our coasts.

7. Naval forces can, however, be very rapidly redispensed in emergency, and if forces can be spared from the Mediterranean they can be made available for trade protection and other work at Home in a period of about 3½ days for vessels at Gibraltar, and 7 days for vessels in the Eastern Mediterranean. The only forces which can be withdrawn without seriously affecting our position in the Mediterranean are the following from Gibraltar:

- 1 battle cruiser.
- 1 6-inch cruiser.
- 1 flying boat squadron.

8. The French coasts and trade would also be open to attack, and until we could redispense our forces the French Atlantic Squadron could expect no help from us in protecting her vital routes and our own.

9. The greater part of the boom defence and similar material intended for the defence of our ports at Home has been sent to the Mediterranean, and sufficient only is in England to equip two ports to a small extent.

10. All available A.A. ammunition has been sent to the Mediterranean and very little remains at Home—new production is not yet available on any scale. Other ammunition reserves for certain ships have been sent abroad, but the situation in this respect is not so serious as for A.A. ammunition.

Army

11. As regards the Field Force, the despatch of the reinforcing units to the Middle East and in particular of R.A.S.C., R.A.M.C., and R.A.O.C., has resulted, as already stated, in a position which prevents us from despatching any further formations of any kind overseas without mobilization.

Coast Defence

12. In the present naval situation the Coast Defences, which are also a Territorial responsibility, are generally satisfactory. Strengths are low but should suffice for immediate manning, not for prolonged operations. Two somewhat weak aspects of the coast defence situation are the absence of any

defence at Scapa Flow, and of up-to-date A.M.T.B. organization at some ports.

13. Some A.A. defence exists for all defended ports from Milford Haven south about to Harwich. These represent a total of 16 guns and 25 search-lights which would be quite insufficient for defence.

Internal Security

14. There is practically no Royal Defence Corps personnel available to provide for internal security and to guard vulnerable points. About five battalions are required. In general, however, the situation as regards internal security would not be serious since the Regular troops which could not be sent overseas could meet requirements with the assistance of the Territorial Army.

Air Force

15. The defensive measures undertaken lately have not only resulted in the despatch of a total of $14\frac{1}{3}$ squadrons and 3 maintenance units from England to the Middle East together with adequate reserves for those squadrons, but also the creation of new headquarter units and a considerable increase in the size of normal staffs in that area. This has seriously depleted the Service units remaining at Home and has made serious inroads on our resources in personnel and equipment. Until the deficiencies in equipment despatched are made good by deliveries from contractors, such aircraft as remain at Home cannot be considered as fully equipped for war operations.

16. The steps which have been taken to implement the expansion of the Royal Air Force which was approved last April have necessarily resulted in a considerable disorganization of Home units owing to the temporary employment of certain first-line squadrons on training duties, and the withdrawal of trained personnel to act as instructors at Flying Training Schools and to form the nucleus of new squadrons.

17. As a result of the above factors, the total metropolitan strength of the Royal Air Force in first-line aircraft to-day gives no true indication of the immediate operational effort which could be produced in a sudden emergency. This would be very much less than appears at first sight to be possible, and would, in fact, provide only a fraction of the offensive and defensive effort required. However, given a short period of preparation—even without mobilization—the position shown in paragraph 18 below could be achieved. This period of preparation is required in order to amalgamate existing first-line aircraft, trained flying and maintenance personnel, and stocks of ancillary equipment collected from various sources, into effective operational units backed by a supply organization.

18. It is estimated that 21 days after the order to prepare, it would be possible to provide squadrons for tasks as follows:

(i) *Home Defence Fighters*: 6 squadrons.

But of these, 2 squadrons would be equipped with an obsolescent type of aircraft which would be of little practical value against the

bombers which Germany could employ, and 2 squadrons with another type which cannot operate at night.

- (ii) *Air Striking Force*: 4 Light Bomber Squadrons.
3 Heavy Bomber Squadrons.

Of these, the 4 Light Bomber Squadrons have insufficient range to operate effectively from bases in this country, and could not be despatched to operate from Continental bases without mobilization. The 3 Heavy Bomber Squadrons could reach the Ruhr-Rhine area of Germany from Home Bases, and could produce an initial effort of approximately 25 tons of bombs per day for a short period.

- (iii) *Coastal Reconnaissance and Naval Co-operation*: 1 Flying Boat Squadron.

This squadron would be equipped with an old type of flying boat with less range than those now in the Mediterranean (but see paragraph 7).

- (iv) *Army Co-operation*: 2 Squadrons.

Note. All the above squadrons would be backed by a 100 per cent. war reserve of aircraft.

The above total of available first-line air forces would be utterly inadequate for Home Defence in a war against Germany even at the present stage of the latter's armament programme.

Air Defence of Great Britain

19. For the Air Defence of Great Britain it would be possible to man not more than 33½ per cent. of that portion of the Defence System considered essential for the protection of London alone. Out of the six Squadrons available for this purpose, two would be of very doubtful operational value by day, and a further two would be useless for defence by night. Our potentialities for immediate counter air offensive action would be limited to a maximum of thirty heavy bomber aircraft.

20. The situation as regards A.A. guns and lights is, generally speaking, equally unsatisfactory, nor would it be improved by mobilizations, since it is a Territorial Army responsibility. Sufficient lights are available to light the fighting zone to the same extent as that for which fighter aircraft are available. This means an illuminated zone some 12 miles deep for a frontage of about 40 miles. The outer artillery zone is incompletely covered; the position in the inner artillery zone is prejudiced by a shortage of searchlights and there is a shortage of A.A. ammunition.

21. In addition, about 500 A.A. Lewis Guns of the Eastern Command are available for protection against low-flying attack, but Lewis Guns are of small value except for the possible moral effect of their presence on the population. There are also in the United Kingdom some Regular A.A. units which, if made available, would represent a reinforcement of some 8 guns and 36 searchlights in various degrees of training, but this contribution would not materially alter the situation.

22. We understand that our position regarding passive air defence measures is being reviewed in the Air Raid Precautions Department of the Home Office.

Situation in the event of Mobilisation being Authorised

23. If mobilisation were authorised, but at the same time it were not possible to bring back from the Mediterranean area any forces at present there, the position would be as follows:

Navy

24. The following vessels could be made available in a period of about 14 days:

- 3 Battleships.
- 1 Aircraft Carrier.
- 2 7.5-inch-gun Cruisers.
- 8 6-inch-gun Cruisers.
- 15 Destroyers.

A list of ships at more than 14 days' notice at Home is given in Appendix I.

25. The above forces together with those immediately available (see paragraph 5) are not sufficient for the requirements of a war with Germany, especially in respect of light craft, and the security of the British Isles and our trade routes could not be assured by these forces alone. Further, such forces would be quite inadequate to provide the escorts required, should an Expeditionary Force be despatched to the Continent.

Army

26. Assuming mobilisation, the following force could be organised in three weeks as a Field Force for despatch overseas:

Corps H.Q., certain Corps Troops and Two Divisions.

27. This force would be without its Air Defence Brigade and any tank units. The units would be largely on a horsed basis, there would be no anti-tank weapons or infantry mortars. Artillery ammunition would be available for 4 months only on a European war basis. A base and line of communication organisation could be provided for an Air Striking Force (*vide* para. 30), as well as for the Field Force.

28. The position regarding A.D.G.B. and Coast Defence would be unchanged.

Air Force

29. Assuming that mobilisation is authorised and that no air forces are brought back from the Middle East area, the total possible addition to our first-line air strength at Home would be 1 Home Defence Fighter Squadron and 2 Light Bomber Squadrons. The additional fighter squadron would, however, be equipped with the same obsolescent type of aircraft as the 2 squadrons referred to in paragraph 18 (i) above.

30. We should also be in a position, 7 days after mobilisation, to commence the despatch abroad of the Light Bomber squadrons included in the insignificant air striking force referred to in paragraph 18 (ii), and the 2 Army Co-operation Squadrons, together with a technical maintenance organisation. The rate of despatch would depend on the availability of shipping. Any contingent despatched to Continental bases would, however, have to be dependent upon Army Sources of non-technical supply and Service.

Situation in the Event of Mobilisation and the Adoption of a Defensive Attitude in the Mediterranean

31. In these circumstances, the position as regards naval readiness becomes somewhat different from that of the Army and Air Force. It would be possible to change the naval strategy and plans in the Mediterranean to release certain naval forces for operations in Home Waters. Present strategy against Italy envisages control of the Central Mediterranean area with a view to exerting the maximum pressure on Italy, and our present dispositions are made to this end.

32. We could, however, decide to hold only the ends of the Mediterranean, thus cutting Italy off from the world outside that sea, in particular, from East Africa; and to abandon any attempt at complete control of the central area.

33. The result of this strategy would be that an Italian war, if it took place, would be prolonged, and Malta might be captured, but our vital interests would be unaffected and final victory in the war with Italy would remain certain.

34. If this strategy were adopted, the following forces could be released from the Mediterranean for service in Home Waters:

- 1—Battleship,
- 2—Battle Cruisers,
- 2—8-inch Cruisers,
- 1—6-inch Cruiser,
- 28—Destroyers,
- 4—Submarines, and
- 1—Netlayer.

35. This force, together with that which would be available after mobilisation (see paragraph 24), should enable us to provide reasonable security for our trade routes and the British Isles, provided that unrestricted submarine warfare was not adopted, though it would not be sufficient to prevent sporadic attack on either, even by the small forces that Germany at present possesses.

36. If Germany did adopt unrestricted warfare, it would be essential for all available A/S craft to return from the Mediterranean, that is to say, we could no longer remain ready for war with Italy in the Mediterranean.

37. If the forces mentioned in paragraph 34 were withdrawn, certain reserves of ammunition, stores, &c., would have to be withdrawn too.

38. With a defensive strategy in the Mediterranean, it would only be

necessary to consider the A/S protection of the harbours of Gibraltar, Alexandria and Haifa (and possibly Port Said).

39. We have at present a large amount of boom material available in the Mediterranean afloat for possible use at advanced bases which could be released and brought Home. This material, together with that already available at Home, would be sufficient for the seaward defences of our four most important naval ports.

40. A change in our attitude towards Italy which involved the adoption of a purely defensive naval strategy in the Mediterranean would do nothing to improve the position of the Army or the Air Force, since the strengths and dispositions of their forces in the Middle East are at present only sufficient to act purely on the defensive against Italian aggression.

Situation in the Event of Mobilisation and on the Assumption that Peace is Guaranteed in the Mediterranean

41. In these circumstances, naval forces in the Mediterranean could be reduced to a very low level and the whole of our Navy, except those ships on distant foreign stations, would be available for service in a war against Germany. This redistribution could be effected in a period of about ten days, but the reserves of ammunition, stores, &c., would take somewhat longer, say, fourteen to twenty days.

42. Military reinforcements could be withdrawn from Egypt with the exception of one Infantry Brigade, which was sent out to meet internal security requirements, and is still required for that purpose. Three Battalions could be taken from Malta, and A.A. and Coast Defence reinforcements could be withdrawn from Malta and other defended ports.

43. It should be noted, however, that some two months would be required to bring Home units from the Mediterranean and to re-organize them.

44. The effect of these withdrawals would be to make available, for a Field Force, A.A. tank and other units. But the total strength of the Field Force which could be maintained overseas could not be in excess of two divisions for some months on account of the impossibility of equipping and maintaining a larger force at the outset.

45. The return of coast defence reinforcements would also enable the coast defences at Home to be strengthened, and the increased number of infantry battalions will allow internal security to be put on an improved basis.

46. The withdrawal of the air reinforcements and their re-establishment on a satisfactory operational footing in this country would take at least 3 to 4 months. Consequently, it would be essential to carry out these movements as early as possible. Assuming that this could be done satisfactorily, the position at Home would, on completion of these movements, be improved by the addition of the following squadrons with their reserves:

Fighter Squadrons—

Single-seaters	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Two-seaters	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4

Light Bomber Squadrons	...	...	...	...	...	5
Torpedo Bomber Squadrons	...	...	...	...	...	1
Flying Boat Squadrons	...	...	...	...	...	3
(but see para. 7)						
Coast Defence (Spotter) Squadron	...	...	...	...	...	$\frac{1}{2}$
						<hr/> 14 $\frac{1}{2}$

A summary of the first-line air strength at the various stages discussed above is given in Appendix II.

French Naval Co-operation

47. French naval forces are distributed between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Those in the Atlantic area are as follows:

- 3 battleships (old).
- 2 Battleships (very old).
- 3 6-inch-gun Cruisers.
- 12 Small Cruisers.
- 19 Destroyers.
- 29 Submarines.

48. The only existing German vessels capable of being a serious threat to our trade are the three *Deutschland* class battleships and their submarines, the former, in particular, with their long endurance and heavy guns, are a serious problem. The only vessels which can deal with the *Deutschland* class are battle-cruisers, or a concentration of several 8-inch-gun cruisers.

49. We have at present only two battle-cruisers available for service (one of our three is refitting), and 8-inch-gun cruisers can ill be spared from the Mediterranean unless peace in that area is assured—a large proportion of our 8-inch-gun cruiser strength is in China, and it appears very undesirable further to weaken ourselves in that area. It is in dealing with these ships that French assistance would be particularly valuable, but the French also have at present all their 8-inch cruisers in the Mediterranean, and have, in fact, in the Atlantic no ship capable of dealing with the *Deutschland* class.

50. If there is any chance of war with Germany, it is, therefore, considered important that France should be pressed to move some or all of her 7 8-inch cruisers to the Atlantic, as these are the only vessels she at present possesses capable of dealing with the *Deutschland* class.

Conclusions

(a) If war with Germany were to break out while our forces are disposed as at present, we should be perilously exposed in the air and completely open to attack at sea. The French would be equally susceptible to naval attack. It would be impossible to send overseas any army formations.

(b) If mobilisation is ordered without withdrawal from the Mediterranean the situation on the naval side would be considerably improved, but the forces available would still not be sufficient to secure the British Isles and our

trade routes (or those of the French). The increase in our air strength and improvement to our air striking power at Home which would result from mobilisation would do little to reduce the seriousness of the air defence situation. A small Field Force, but lacking in modern equipment, could be despatched overseas.

(c) (i) If we adopt a defensive strategy in the Mediterranean, certain naval units can be withdrawn which should be sufficient, with mobilisation, to provide reasonable security for our trade routes and the British Isles, provided that unrestricted submarine warfare were not adopted. There would be no alteration of note in the Army and Air Force situation. We do not recommend this policy.

(ii) If peace is guaranteed in the Mediterranean, the necessary naval distribution for the complete requirements for a war with Germany could be effected in a period of about ten days so far as His Majesty's ships are concerned, but adequate seaward defence of our ports would take longer. The Field Force could be provided with tank and air defence units, and some anti-tank guns, but not for two months after the orders for withdrawal are given. Air defence units at Home would be strengthened. The air situation would be very little improved until after three to four months, and even then the total air strength available at Home would be quite inadequate for security against air attack or to prosecute successfully an air offensive against Germany.

APPENDIX I TO ENCLOSURE IN NO. 134

Ships at More than 14 Days' Notice

At 28 days' notice—

1 Battleship (*Resolution*).

At 42 days' notice—

3—6-inch Cruisers.

9 Destroyers.

1 Submarine (refitting).

At 56 days' notice—

20 Destroyers.

At more than 56 days' notice—

2 Aircraft Carriers (*Courageous*, refitting, completes 24/6, and *Argus*).

2—7.5-inch Cruisers (4½ months).

7 Destroyers.

1—6-inch Cruiser (completes 6/7).

8 Submarines.

Long refit—

1 Battlecruiser (*Repulse*, completes 11/5).

3 Battleships.

2—8-inch Cruisers.

APPENDIX II TO ENCLOSURE IN No. 134

From the foregoing, our actual first-line air strength at Home at the various stages considered above can be summarised as follows:

Type of Squadron	After 21 days' preparation	After Mobilization	After withdrawal of M.E. reinforcements (3-4 months)
Fighters	6 ⁵	7 ⁶	12 ⁷
Light Bombers ..	4 ⁸	6	11
Heavy Bombers ..	3	3	3
Torpedo Bombers ..	..	..	1
Army Co-operation	2	2	2
Flying Boats ..	2 ⁹	2 ⁹	4
Spotters .. ..	..	..	$\frac{1}{2}$
Total-Squadrons	17 ⁹	20 ⁹	33 $\frac{1}{2}$
First Line Aircraft ..	182	218	362
Immediate Reserve Aircraft	182	218	362

⁵ *Note in original:* Includes 2 Squadrons equipped with obsolescent aircraft, possessing inadequate performance.

⁶ *Note in original:* Includes 3 Squadrons equipped with obsolescent aircraft, possessing inadequate performance.

⁷ *Note in original:* Includes 2 Squadrons unable to operate at night.

⁸ *Note in original:* Cannot operate effectively against Germany from this country, and cannot be sent abroad without mobilization.

⁹ *Note in original:* Provided 1 Flying Boat Squadron is withdrawn from the Western Mediterranean (see paragraph 7).

No. 135

Minute by Mr. Sargent on possible British policies towards Germany

[C 1906/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 18, 1936

If we assume that Germany's financial and economic situation is critical, for the reasons given by Mr. Gwatkin in paragraph 2 of his minute¹ four possible policies emerge.

(1) The policy of co-operating at once with Germany in restoring her

¹ Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's minute of March 16 was a commentary on the letter by Mr. Harold Butler of March 11, a copy of which had been sent to the Foreign Office by Sir Horace Wilson (No. 122, note 3). Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin ascribed Germany's difficulties in the economic sphere to 'two perils which threaten her whole structure. One is external and arises from the difficulty of getting raw materials owing to lack of the wherewithal to pay for them. . . The other is internal, and arises from heavy government expenditure financed by short term borrowing. . .'

financial and economic position without waiting for a political settlement, on the ground that Germany's prosperity is an immediate European interest and will alone cure Germany of her present militaristic and expansionist tendencies.

The objection to this course is to be found in Sir E. Phipps's letter of the 19th February (C 1180),² where he points out that if Germany goes to war it will either be (a) as a result of some fortuitous incident; or (b) as part of the Bismarck policy of war as *the* instrument of policy. The restoration of Germany's material prosperity will not prevent a war under category (a); whereas it might actually encourage a war under category (b), since such a Bismarckian war is only conceivable when economic conditions are extremely favourable.

In this connexion we must bear in mind the technique of the Bismarckian wars. The whole object of Bismarck's policy was to prevent the situation arising in which there would be a general European coalition against Germany. So long, therefore, as it is impossible for Germany to play off one Great Power against another, a Bismarckian war is unlikely, however favourable the economic situation may be, for, according to the Bismarckian technique, Germany would never risk her newly won prosperity unless political conditions were so favourable as to reduce the risk of failure to a minimum.

If we assume, therefore, the possibility of a Bismarckian war, it may be said that we can risk Germany becoming prosperous only if we are certain of being able to prevent that political disagreement between the Great Powers which is the other essential for a Bismarckian war.

(2) Another policy would be to use the present political crisis in order to impose financial sanctions on Germany, on the assumption that Germany's economic structure is so precarious that the effect of such sanctions would be immediate and catastrophic. This is the French thesis. It is quite tenable, even if the Locarno Powers alone impose economic sanctions. The recent A.T.B. Report³ shows that Great Britain alone by closing the British market to German goods can deprive Germany of 50 per cent (£30 million a year) of her all precious free exchange.

² Volume XV, No. 530.

³ Paragraph 4. This report resulted from a reference at the Cabinet meeting of March 9 (cf. No. 48, note 20) by Mr. W. Elliot, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Chairman of the A.T.B. Committee, to the A.T.B. report of June 1935 on the possibility of bringing economic pressure to bear on Germany (Volume XII, No. 723, note 4). The Cabinet asked for a revised version of the report, which was speedily produced by the Economic Pressure Sub-Committee of the A.T.B. Committee. Owing to the urgency of the situation the revised report was communicated directly to the Cabinet on March 19, 1936. It rejected the idea of a 'pacific blockade' as impracticable; indicated the extent to which the German (and also the British) economy could be damaged by British interference with German imports and exports, and concluded that without information as to the states likely to co-operate it was impossible to form even provisional conclusions as to the overall effect of economic sanctions on Germany. The A.T.B. Committee does not appear to have circulated the report to the C.I.D. until October 29, 1936. A copy was filed in the F.O. archives under the number C 8044/8044/18.

The objection, of course, is that Hitler, faced with such a catastrophe, might prefer war. We should also ourselves be involved in very serious financial and economic loss.

(3) A minor variation of the preceding policy would be for us to follow, not merely during the present crisis but generally, the line of doing all we can, short of actually applying 'unfriendly measures', to prevent Germany from emerging from her present economic and financial distress, in the hopes that this would make it materially impossible for Germany to embark on militaristic adventures, and might indeed undermine the Nazi régime and bring about another Germany which would be less capable of mischief in the foreign field.

The objection to this course is that if such economic boycott proved effective it might very well have just the opposite effect from that at which we were aiming and might, instead of overthrowing the régime, drive Hitler in despair to a war as being the only means left to him to escape from the deadlock in which he found himself.

(4) A fourth policy would be to offer Germany economic and financial help (possibly of a kind outlined in paragraph 6 of Mr. Gwatkin's minute)⁴ *in return for, and subsequent to, a general political settlement.*

This, I gather from Mr. Butler's present letter and from the last paragraph of Sir E. Phipps's letter in C 1180, would be in accordance with the views both hold, and, of the four courses, it certainly would seem to be the most far-sighted and statesmanlike, but only on condition that we do not delay too long, for German economics will increasingly react on, and may soon dominate, German foreign politics, with quite incalculable results.⁵

To sum up: there are risks in every course, but, taking one thing with the other, it would probably be better to have a reasonably fat Germany with a general political settlement, rather than a desperately lean one, with a continuance of the present state of political strain and uncertainty.⁶

O. G. SARGENT

⁴ The courses mentioned in the minute included (1) a preferential area for German trade in Central and South Eastern Europe; (2) tariff concessions to German trade in the United Kingdom and other British markets; (3) a halt to the progressive increase of the United Kingdom tariffs against German goods; (4) the consideration of a loan for Germany; (5) co-operation with Germany in credits and orders for Soviet Russia. The minute concluded: 'But perhaps it has already been decided in the councils of the Allies, that German economic weakness is an asset; and that now or never is an opportunity to beat her down. In this case, there is nothing more that the Economic Section can usefully say on the subject.' A marginal comment on these two sentences by Mr. Eden reads: 'I cannot admit that we are to blame for G[erman] economic weakness.'

⁵ A marginal comment on this paragraph by Mr. Eden read: 'I agree.'

⁶ A minute by Lord Stanhope included the following passage: 'I agree with Mr. Gwatkin that we should offer to co-operate with Germany in a European economic recovery but let us do so, not with the sole idea of rehabilitating Germany, but with our eyes on the wider issues and with a realization that, until she gives proof to the contrary, Germany is a nation that will "need watching" and that we shall not be serving the cause of peace either by handing over her weaker neighbours into her economic clutches or by weakening ourselves. S. 20/3/36.' Mr. Eden indicated his agreement with the second half of this passage. Sir R. Vansittart wrote (March 22) that he agreed with Lord Stanhope's minute. 'It is of the

prepared war that I am afraid, & justifiably so, seeing that Germany has embarked on 4 such within living memory. Until we can be quite sure that she has for ever renounced her evil ways, we must be extremely cautious in strengthening her at the expense of ourselves or of our connections. . . .'

No. 136

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 353 [C 2169/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1936*

Sir,

Herr von Ribbentrop, who called to see me today at the House of Commons, explained that he was glad to come to London, and he hoped to be able to have several conversations with me on the subject of negotiations which he was very anxious to see started. How long did I think it would be before some progress could be made with these negotiations? Perhaps His Majesty's Government could act as go-between between the German Government and the French Government? I replied that a first essential was to create conditions in which negotiations could take place. I told Herr von Ribbentrop that His Majesty's Government were much perturbed by the very real gravity of the international situation which Germany's unilateral act has created. The position was a serious one and we must all make an effort to remedy it. Contributions would have to be looked for from all and in due course I should have to ask his Government to make its share.

2. The German representative replied that while of course he would be glad to help me in a personal capacity he must make it clear at once that the German Government could make no contribution of a kind which would in any way impair its sovereignty over the whole Reich. Upon this they were quite uncompromising and he wished me to know this from the start. I replied that while I fully understood the German Government's position as stated by Herr von Ribbentrop, yet we were living in critical times and it was necessary for us all as good Europeans to give some help in order that confidence might be restored throughout the Continent.

3. Herr von Ribbentrop then gave me some account of the case which he proposed to put before the Council the next day and we arranged to have a further conversation when those proceedings were over.¹

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

¹ Herr von Ribbentrop arrived in London on the evening of March 18; for his account of this conversation, which took place shortly after his arrival, see *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 152. He gave a more generalized account of his visit to London in March 1936 in *Zwischen London und Moskau, Erinnerungen und letzte Aufzeichnungen* (1953), pp. 79-87.

No. 137

Letter from Mr. S. D. Waley¹ (Treasury) to Mr. C. W. Baxter

[C 2089/99/18]

TREASURY CHAMBERS, *March 18, 1936*

Dear Baxter,

The Treasury propose the following reply to Question No. 77 by Mr. Ellis Smith² for Monday.³

'In December, 1934, the Bank of England granted a credit of £750,000 to the Reichsbank in order to expedite the liquidation of outstanding trade debts to United Kingdom creditors. This credit was given with my full approval and has since been repaid. No other credit or loan has been given or made to the German Government or to German Banks by H.M.G. or the Bank of England in the last three years and no such credit or loan is in negotiation or contemplation. I am not aware that other English Banks or Banking Houses have in the last three years given or made, or now have under contemplation, any such credits or loans, apart from short term credits for commercial transactions.'

Perhaps I may assume that the Foreign Office agree unless I hear to the contrary.⁴

Yours sincerely,
S. D. WALEY

¹ Mr. Waley was a Principal Assistant Secretary in H.M. Treasury.

² The questioner asked for particulars of loans to Germany from any British source during the previous three years: cf. Volume XII, No. 298.

³ March 23, 1936.

⁴ The terms of the reply were approved by telephone and the reply was given in substantially the form indicated by Mr. W. S. Morrison, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, on March 23; see 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 884.

No. 138

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 19, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 151¹ Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2112/4/18]

PARIS, *March 19, 1936*

Council of Ministers meets at 9 p.m. this evening to hear report from Monsieur Flandin on results of London negotiations. Meanwhile Press Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are informing² that these results are quite satisfactory.

¹ This telegram was despatched in advance of No. 139 below.

² Some word or words appear to have been here omitted.

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 19, 8 p.m.)

No. 149 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2110/4/18]

Immediate

PARIS, March 19, 1936

My telegram No. 147.¹

The President of the Council, whom I saw this morning, expressed himself to me very fully, very frankly, and very pessimistically. He said that he knew that I was a loyal friend and he was speaking as Sarraut and not as President of the Council. He could not and would not use in public the words that he now used to me but the feelings of the President of the Council were the same as those of Sarraut. He began by saying that M. Laval, who was miserable at being out in the cold, was striving with every nerve to upset the existing Government, but there was no chance of his succeeding in his efforts. He then made a long, sad, and impassioned discourse, the gist of which was that France, who only sought for peace, who always had been, and still was, ready to discuss with Germany, had counted above all on the moral support of England in the situation which Herr Hitler's infraction of Germany's freely given word had brought about. M. Sarraut himself and French opinion had welcomed with joy the amazing and patently sincere growth since 1931 of British belief in collective security and the League of Nations. In spite of cavilling and criticism induced by internal politics, France had realised that British action in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute had been dictated by no selfish Imperialist interest but solely in the spirit of the principles of the League of Nations. It was therefore all the more bitter to French opinion to find in the present case the British Government abandoning its position as a guarantor of France and Belgium and assuming the rôle of mediator. He did not mean that we should have joined France in sending horse, foot and artillery into the Rhineland, but he, and the whole of French opinion, felt that we should have stood by France and said: Negotiations, certainly, but negotiations on an equal basis and with equals, and not as a reward for a flagrant violation of the freely pledged word of a great and threatening Power. M. Sarraut was obsessed by the fear that the result of the discussions in London would not only so weaken the authority of the League of Nations as to leave it a mere shadow, but would, which was far worse, destroy French confidence in British policy and make a breach between the two great peoples on whose union depended the safety of Europe and the world from the rule of lawlessness and violence—whether Bolshevik or Fascist, it was all the same.

M. Sarraut admitted that M. Flandin had only been able to give him over the telephone a very brief and guarded indication of the results of your meeting last night² and he hoped that when he saw M. Flandin this evening

¹ The reference should apparently be to Sir G. Clerk's telegram No. 146, i.e. No. 129 above.

² Cf. No. 132, note 4.

the situation might not be quite so depressing as he saw it when speaking to me this morning. But he could tell me that if he wanted to arouse a wave of delirious enthusiasm for himself and his government he had only to say publicly: 'Italy is our friend, and with her we will talk directly with the Führer'. He prayed to God that he might not have to do so, but to him events were moving in that direction. What that meant in fact was that France would make her terms with Germany and look after herself, strong enough to carry on, with the help of her colonial possessions, a decent self-contained national life, and strong enough to defend herself successfully against attack from outside, but powerless to prevent the growth of German dominion, and all that that implied, in the rest of Europe and in the world.

Making all allowance for exaggeration due to depression and anxiety and sense of responsibility in a crisis of the first magnitude, I believe that M. Sarraut's words are a reflection of the feeling in France, which is intensifying with every hour that passes.

I am writing in ignorance of the proposals which M. Flandin is bringing with him from London, but I feel it my duty to warn you that the situation here has deteriorated in the last 24 hours, and the tendencies of public opinion which I outlined in my telegram under reference³ are becoming much more clearly defined. In short, if His Majesty's Government cannot go some way to calm French fears by meeting the French Government and providing some substitute for the Locarno guarantees, the effect on British prestige and on Anglo-French relations in the future may be disastrous.⁴

³ A marginal note here reads: '? No. 146': see note 1. In a minute of March 20 Mr. Sargent referred to this paragraph and remarked: 'Sir George Clerk's conclusion in the paragraph I have marked . . . is strikingly at variance with the estimate of the situation which he gave in his telegram No. 146.'

⁴ Further minutes on this telegram by Sir R. Vansittart and Mr. Eden include the following comments. 'I think both M. Flandin & M. Sarraut have laid it on too thick, but we must be careful not to discount them too completely or lightly. Anyhow the situation between us had improved before M. Flandin left; & he had probably not time to tell M. Sarraut much about it before Sir G. Clerk saw M. Sarraut. R. V. March 20.' 'I am sorry that Sir G. Clerk did not reply. We should not allow French politicians to speak like this without reacting. A. E. March 21.'

No. 140

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 19, 8 p.m.)

No. 149¹ Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2110/4/18]

Immediate

PARIS, March 19, 1936

Part II. It may indeed be that the 'super-structure' mentioned in British proposal (your telegram No. 76²) has indeed been devised for just such a purpose. If so, I hope offer will be made known, as it should go far to comfort our friends in this country.

¹ This telegram is a continuation of No. 139.

² No. 131.

No. 141

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 78¹ Telegraphic [C 2100/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1936*

My telegram No. 74².

Council met in private session yesterday afternoon and President³ read a communication from the German Ambassador stating that the German representative⁴ would be unable to arrive for the meeting but would be at the disposal of the Council on the next morning. The German Government did not desire to appoint a substitute for the present meeting but noted that while the Council would continue the general discussion it would not proceed to a vote in the absence of a German representative.

At the ensuing public session the Council continued the general discussion on the draft resolution submitted by the French and Belgian Delegations.

I addressed the Council, and speeches were subsequently made by the representatives of Italy, Poland, Spain, Argentina, Denmark, Portugal and Roumania.⁵

The Council decided to meet again this morning.

¹ No. 12 Saving to Berlin, No. 21 Saving to Rome, No. 7 Saving to Brussels.

² No. 130.

³ Mr. S. M. Bruce.

⁴ Herr von Ribbentrop; see No. 136, note 1.

⁵ *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 325-32, gives a full account of this meeting.

No. 142

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 80¹ Telegraphic [C 2128/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1936, 8 p.m.*

My telegram No. 78².

The Council met this morning in private session,³ Herr von Ribbentrop was present as the representative of Germany. On the question of procedure Herr von Ribbentrop asked that the vote of the Council on the Franco-Belgian resolution referred to in my telegram No. 72⁴ should not be taken immediately after he had spoken. After a discussion in the course of which the President pointed out that some members might wish to reply to Herr von Ribbentrop's statement the Council decided to meet again in the afternoon in order to take a vote.

In the ensuing public session Herr von Ribbentrop addressed the Council.

¹ No. 13 Saving to Berlin, No. 22 Saving to Rome, No. 8 Saving to Brussels.

² No. 141.

³ Minutes of this session, and of the ensuing public session, are printed in *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-8.

⁴ No. 113.

In the afternoon session⁵ the President spoke in his capacity of representative of Australia and stated that the speech of the German representative had not altered his views as to the proper course for the Council to take, he would vote for the resolution.

The vote was then taken. Affirmative votes were given by the representatives of the Argentine, Denmark, Spain, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Turkey, the U.S.S.R., Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium and France. The representative of Chile abstained for reasons which he had previously explained to the Council (see my telegram No. 74).⁶ The representative of Germany voted against. The representative of Ecuador was absent.

The representative of Germany then made a formal protest against the vote. France, not Germany, was responsible for the termination of the Locarno Treaty. If the Council had had time to consider his full statement they might have come to a different conclusion. Their decision would not be confirmed by the judgment of history.

The representative of France⁷ replied that under international law no nation could be a judge in his own cause. France was prepared to lay the dispute before the Permanent Court of International Justice.

The Council then decided to meet again tomorrow in private session to determine its future procedure and course of action.⁸

⁵ *L.N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 338-41.

⁶ No. 130.

⁷ M. Flandin. He also attended the later stages of the morning session.

⁸ Herr von Ribbentrop's speech at the morning session, which was fully reported in *The Times* of March 20 (p. 9) and elsewhere, led Mr. Sargent on March 20 to comment on its 'specious misstatements'. He suggested the publication of a White Paper showing British efforts since 1934 to reach an agreement with Germany, 'the reasons why the Franco-Russian Treaty came about and why we acquiesced in it'. Mr. Eden thought this 'an excellent suggestion' and remarked that it would be well 'to give it the complexion of our efforts to [?]improve not so much Anglo-German relations as those between Western powers. A. E. March 21.' The correspondence was published as a blue book, *Miscellaneous No. 3* (1936), *Correspondence showing the course of certain Diplomatic Discussions directed towards securing An European Settlement* (1936, Cmd. 5143).

No. 143

Record by Mr. R. C. S. Stevenson of a conversation with Mr. F. P. Walters¹ concerning the forthcoming meeting of the Committee of Thirteen

[J 2486/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 19, 1936

I spoke to Mr. Walters and M. Madariaga² to-day, after the Council meeting, on the subject of the meeting of the Committee of Thirteen tomorrow at 3.30 p.m.³

¹ Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations.

² Spanish delegate to the League of Nations.

³ The meeting finally took place on March 23 at 10.30 a.m.: see No. 158 below. Mr. Eden had asked for the postponement owing to the great pressure on him in connection

2. Mr. Walters informed me that a message would be sent by the Secretariat to the Abyssinian Minister in Paris,⁴ through Dr. Martin, suggesting that a qualified representative of Abyssinia should be available in London tomorrow for consultation if necessary. The Abyssinian Minister in Paris has, it seems, the necessary authority. It is doubtful whether Dr. Martin has any instructions whatever.

3. The idea is that at tomorrow's meeting the Committee should make an appeal to both sides to cease hostilities during the negotiations. Mr. Walters suggested that the United Kingdom Delegation might, when the time came to discuss procedure, propose that the Committee should authorise M. Madariaga to sound the parties on their ideas of how negotiations should be started. I promised that I would enquire whether we agreed to do this.

4. Mr. Walters said that there were certain questions which the Committee would have to discuss before negotiations started, such as (a) whether the basis of negotiations should be the proposals of the Committee of Five,⁵ or (b) whether the Committee itself should try and work out some new basis, or (c) whether the Italians should be asked what proposals they had to make.⁶

5. Further meetings of the Committee will, it is presumed, depend on whether the Council continues to sit in London.

with the German negotiations. On March 19 he asked his cabinet colleagues for their views as to the raising of sanctions against Italy, which might be strongly advocated in return for a truce between Italy and Ethiopia. His own view was that 'sanctions ought not to be taken off merely in return for a truce, and that we must be assured of peace being in sight'. The Cabinet evidently concurred in this view. Mr. N. Chamberlain 'suggested that if sanctions were taken off before peace were in sight there would be political trouble in this country. The imposition of fresh sanctions, however, was a very different question.' Mr. Peterson noted on March 25: 'In the event, no one suggested the raising of sanctions.'

⁴ M. Wolde Mariam.

⁵ Cf. Volume XIV, No. 641, note 4.

⁶ A note by Mr. Scrivener of March 23 said that these questions 'were, I understand, discussed on Saturday 21/3 prior to the meeting of the Committee today'. The matter had also been aired in minutes of March 19. Lord Cranborne saw grave disadvantages in two of Mr. Walters's proposals, namely that M. de Madariaga should sound the two parties as to their ideas, or that the Committee itself should agree on a new basis, which would be put to the parties. So on the whole he thought it best that a basis of negotiation should be sought in the proposals of the Committee of Five. Mr. Peterson doubted whether this basis would be acceptable to either party, but thought that they should be asked: failing that they should be asked about their alternative proposals. Sir L. Oliphant agreed.

Text of Proposals drawn up by the Representatives of Belgium, France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Italy, London, March 19, 1936¹

[C 2148/4/18]

The representatives of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Italy, having met to examine the situation created by the communication addressed to their respective Governments by the German Government on the 7th March, 1936,²

I

Take note of the draft resolution submitted to the Council of the League of Nations in the name of Belgium and France, by which the fact of the breach by Germany of article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles has been established with a view to giving notice thereof to the Powers signatories of the Treaty of Locarno.

They further take note of the support given to this draft resolution by the Governments of the United Kingdom and Italy.

II

Whereas:

(1) Scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations is a fundamental principle of international life and an essential condition of the maintenance of peace;

(2) It is an essential principle of the law of nations that no Power can liberate itself from the engagements of a treaty nor modify the stipulations thereof except with the consent of the other contracting parties;

(3) The breach of article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles and the unilateral action taken by the German Government in violation of the Treaty of Locarno without recourse to the procedure laid down by the Treaty of Locarno for the settlement of disputes conflict with these principles;

Consider that:

(1) By this unilateral action the German Government confers upon itself no legal rights;

(2) This unilateral action by introducing a new disturbing element into the international situation must necessarily appear to be a threat to European security.

III

Declare that nothing that has happened before or since the said breach of the Treaty of Locarno can be considered as having freed the signatories of

¹ See No. 132, note 4. This document was circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 86(36). The text, excluding the 'letters' in the last section, was published in *The Times* of March 21 (p. 17). The full text also appears in *L.N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 348-51, in a White Paper of March 20, 1936 (Cmd. 5134), and elsewhere.

² See Enclosure in No. 42.

that treaty from any of their obligations or guarantees and that the latter subsist in their entirety.

Undertake forthwith to instruct their General Staffs to enter into contact with a view to arranging the technical conditions in which the obligations which are binding upon them should be carried out in case of unprovoked aggression.

IV

Decide to invite the German Government to lay before the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague the argument which it claims to draw from the incompatibility between the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance and the Treaty of Locarno, and to undertake to accept as final the decision of the said court, without prejudice to the operation of paragraph 7(2) below.

The French Government declares that it has already agreed that the said court should be seized of the question stated above.

V

Decide in the name of their Governments jointly to invite the German Government to subscribe to the following provisional arrangements, which shall remain valid until the conclusion of the negotiations referred to in paragraph 7 below:

(1) All despatch of troops or war material into the zone defined by article 42 of the Treaty of Versailles will be immediately suspended; in consequence, the forces stationed there will not exceed . . . battalions and . . . batteries of artillery (insert here the official figures given by the German Government);

(2) The paramilitary forces (S.A., S.S., Labour Corps and other organisations) stationed in the said zone will be strictly maintained as they were before the 7th March, 1936; in particular they shall in no case be formed into large units or serve directly or indirectly for the reinforcement of troops;

(3) No works of fortification or preparation of groundworks shall be proceeded with in the said zone. No landing ground will be laid out, equipped or improved there.

The Governments of France and of Belgium undertake similarly to suspend during the period any despatch of troops into the zones adjoining the frontiers between their countries and Germany.

VI

Decide to take, for the same period, all the necessary measures with a view to

(1) Create an international force, including detachments from the armies of the guarantor Powers, to be stationed, with the agreement of all the Governments concerned, in a zone contained between the

Belgian-German and Franco-German frontiers on one side, and on the other a line situated to the east of the said frontiers and following them at a distance of approximately 20 kilom[etres], this zone being entirely reserved for occupation by the said international force;

(2) Set up an international commission whose duty it shall be to supervise the carrying out of the obligations undertaken by the Powers which have formed the above-mentioned force, as well as by Belgium, France and Germany for the eventual execution of paragraphs V and VI (1) above.

VII

Taking note of the proposals made by Germany in the memorandum communicated to them on the 7th March,

Decide, so far as they are concerned

To propose to the German Government, if that Government explicitly accepts the invitations addressed to it in pursuance of the preceding paragraphs, that it should take part in negotiations which would be based in particular on the following elements:

(1) Examination of the proposals Nos. 2 to 5 made by Germany in the memorandum of the 7th March;

(2) Revision of the status of the Rhineland;

(3) Drawing up of mutual assistance pacts open to all the signatories of the Treaty of Locarno, and intended to reinforce their security.

So far as concerns the four Powers represented in London, the reinforcement of their security provided for will include in particular obligations of mutual assistance between Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Italy, or any of them, with suitable provisions to ensure prompt action by the signatories in case of need as well as technical arrangements for the preparation of such measures as would ensure the effective execution of the obligations undertaken.

Further, the four Powers declare that they have agreed to press in the course of the negotiations for the adoption of provisions intended to prohibit or to limit the subsequent establishment of fortifications in a zone to be determined.

VIII

Considering that the maintenance of peace and the organisation of collective security can only be assured by the respect for treaties and the limitation of armaments; that the re-establishment of economic relations between the nations on a healthy basis is equally necessary to the process of reconstruction.

Declare themselves ready

To support the introduction at the Council of the League of Nations of resolutions proposing to invite all the nations concerned to an international conference which would in particular examine

(1) Agreements organising on a precise and effective basis the system of

collective security, and paying attention to the definition of the conditions in which article XVI of the Covenant of the League of Nations should be applied;

- (2) Agreements tending to assure the effective limitation of armaments;
- (3) International arrangements having as their object the extension of economic relations and the organisation of commerce between the nations;
- (4) The proposals 6 and 7 made by the German Government in their memorandum of the 7th March, as well as the suggestions made subsequently in regard to Austria and Czechoslovakia.

IX

Recalling that, under article 7 of the Treaty of Locarno, the obligations devolving upon their respective Governments do not restrict the duty of the League of Nations to take whatever action may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of the world;

Referring to the resolution of the Council of the League of Nations of the 17th April, 1935,³ regarding the course to be adopted by the members of the League of Nations in the event of the unilateral repudiation of undertakings concerning the security of peoples and the maintenance of peace in Europe;

Decide

- (1) To notify the Council of the League of Nations, under article 11 of the Covenant, of the unilateral action taken by Germany, action which appears a danger for European security and a threat to peace;
- (2) Consequently to propose the annexed resolutions to the Council of the League of Nations, it being understood that the German Government would be entitled to present its observations on the subject.

Draft Resolution to be presented to the Council of the League of Nations

I. The Council:

Recalling that it has itself on several occasions recognised, as has also the Assembly, the importance of the Treaties of Locarno from the point of view of the maintenance of peace and security,

Considering that:

- (1) Scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations is a fundamental principle of international life and an essential condition of the maintenance of peace;
- (2) It is an essential principle of the law of nations that no Power can liberate itself from the engagements of a treaty nor modify the stipulations thereof unless with the consent of the other contracting parties;
- (3) The breach of article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles and the unilateral action taken by the German Government in violation of the Treaty of Locarno without recourse to the procedure laid down by the Treaty of Locarno for the settlement of disputes conflict with these principles;

³ Cf. Volume XII, Nos. 722 and 732.

Considers that:

(1) By this unilateral action the German Government confers upon itself no legal rights;

(2) This unilateral action, by introducing a new disturbing element into the international situation, must necessarily appear to be a threat to European security.

Entrusts a committee composed of . . . with the task of making proposals to it with regard to the practical measures to be recommended to the members of the League of Nations.

II. Considering:

That the German Government has claimed that the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance is incompatible with the Treaty of Locarno, and that in consequence of this incompatibility that Government was justified, not only in denouncing the said treaty, but also in introducing its troops into the demilitarised zone,

That there thus arises a juridical question which might be usefully taken before the Permanent Court of International Justice if the interested Powers were to declare themselves ready to comply with the decision of the court, as the French Government for its part has already agreed to do,

The Council:

Invites the German Government to notify the Permanent Court of International Justice of the question thus defined and in the conditions indicated above, and to request it to give its decision as soon as possible, it being understood that the parties will at once comply with the ruling of the court.

III. Considering:

That the unilateral action of Germany has necessarily appeared to be a threat to European peace, and that in consequence it ought, without prejudice to the application of articles I and IV of the Locarno Treaty, to bring about on the part of the members of the League of Nations, by application of, and in accordance with the terms of article 11 of the Covenant, the adoption of any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations;

The Council takes note:

(1) Of the declaration drawn up in the name of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Italy, as regards the maintenance in force for those Powers of the rights and obligations resulting from the Treaty of Locarno;

(2) Of the communications made to it by the Governments of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Italy on the subject of the measures contemplated in respect of the situation created by the violation of the zone defined in article 42 of the Treaty of Versailles.

Letters to be addressed by the Representatives of the United Kingdom and Italy to the Representatives of Belgium and France

At the moment when the representatives of Belgium, France, Great Britain and Italy have just decided, as provided in to-day's arrangement, the common line of conduct of their respective Governments, I am authorised to give you the official assurance that, if the effort of conciliation attempted in the said arrangement should fail, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom/the Italian Government:

1. (a) Will at once consider, in consultation with your Government and the French/Belgian Government, the steps to be taken to meet the new situation thus created;

(b) Will immediately come to the assistance of your Government, in accordance with the Treaty of Locarno, in respect of any measures which shall be jointly decided upon;

(c) Will, in return for reciprocal assurances from your Government, take, in consultation with your Government, all practical measures available to His Majesty's Government for the purpose of ensuring the security of your country against unprovoked aggression;

(d) Will, for this purpose, establish or continue the contact between the General Staffs of our two countries contemplated in paragraph III(2) of the said arrangement;

2. And, furthermore, will subsequently endeavour at the Council of the League of Nations to secure the formulation by the latter of all useful recommendations for the maintenance of peace and the respect for international law.

No. 145

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 354 [C 2170/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1936*

Sir,

The Lord Privy Seal and I had an interview with Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr Dieckhoff this evening and I said that I had asked him to come and see me in order that I might go through with him the text of the proposals which had been provisionally agreed by the representatives of the four Locarno Powers in London, and which were now being submitted to their respective Governments.¹

2. I gave the German representative a summary of the contents of the document, reading the more important passages to him. At the conclusion His Excellency stated that while not wishing to express himself finally until he had had time to study the document, he was bound to tell me that there

¹ See Nos. 132 and 144.

were two points which seemed to him quite unacceptable by the German Government. The first was that in connexion with the international force, and the second was that which dealt with the fortification of the zone. We both urged Herr von Ribbentrop very strongly carefully to study the document which I would send him later in the evening, and to appreciate in so doing how great a contribution had been made by all concerned in an endeavour to secure an issue from the present grave international situation. We also urged upon him the importance of pressing his Government to make some contribution on their side to help us in our hard task as mediators.²

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

² Cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 162.

No. 146

*Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine*¹ (*Angora*)

No. 112 [J 2060/15/1]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1936*

Sir,

In his despatch to Your Excellency of February 28th² reporting his conversations with the Turkish General Staff on the subject of mutual assistance, Wing Commander Vincent stated that the General Staff were anxious to learn what forces of surface ships and aircraft would be sent to the assistance of Turkey if, in the event of a war with Italy, all the air forces in the Dodecanese were directed against Anatolia. At a later stage of the conversation the Deputy Chief of the General Staff enquired whether modern photographic equipment could be supplied for the purpose of taking photographs of the Italian islands.³

2. Whilst it is impossible to return a detailed reply to these questions at the present juncture, your Excellency is authorized, if you think it desirable,

¹ H.M. Ambassador at Angora.

² Not printed.

³ In a letter of February 29 to Mr. C. J. Norton, Private Secretary to Sir R. Vansittart, Sir P. Loraine forwarded a copy of Wing Commander Vincent's report of February 28 and also a copy of a report by the Military Attaché at Angora, Major F. A. Sampson, of the same date. Major Sampson remarked that he had had conversations with General Asim and other Turkish officers on February 26 and 27. 'The first day's conversations, which lasted for about 2½ hours, produced no results. General Asim seemed to have no clear instructions, countered every request for information by asking us to produce information first and generally gave the impression of being obstructive and unable to grasp the point of the meeting. On the second day his tone and manner changed considerably for the better. . . This happy result was partly due to the information about our own dispositions which Wing Commander Vincent was able and willing to impart on the first day and partly to our visible annoyance at the obstructive attitude at first adopted.'

to convey a general assurance to the Turkish Government that in the event of a conflict arising out of League action in connection with the present Italo-Ethiopian dispute, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would fulfil their obligations in whatever form was most practicable if and when the case arose.⁴

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

⁴ A minute by Mr. Scrivener of March 6 read: 'This question can clearly only be answered in the light of a general review of the whole series of conversations, but having regard to the anxiety which the Turks appear to be manifesting, it might be well to consider an assurance on the lines of that already given to the Yugoslavs' (cf. Volume XV, Nos. 445 and 553).

No. 147

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 65 Telegraphic [C 1939/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 20, 1936, 2.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 54 Saving.¹

Mr. Ward Price states² that, in addition to account of his conversation with the Chancellor given to you, Herr Hitler told him that if his peace offer were carried through he would have no objection to

(1) Britain giving France a protective guarantee without a corresponding guarantee to Germany against France;

(2) France concluding a defensive military alliance with Russia, if she so chose.

Please send your observations on these two points.

¹ This telegram of March 13 gave Mr. Ward Price's account of an interview with Herr Hitler and General Goering to which he had been invited that afternoon. Herr Hitler said that he would accept any arrangement which ensured parity of treatment between France and Germany. He would withdraw troops from the frontier if France did so. To Mr. Ward Price's suggestion of a neutral zone between France and Germany guaranteed by contingents of British, Italian, and Swedish troops on the Saar model (cf. No. 115), Herr Hitler replied that he would be prepared to accept, providing that the zone extended into French as well as German territory. He would prefer to have only British troops, who had 'left an excellent reputation in the Saar'. He also said, striding up and down, 'Believe me, there is nothing I would not do to gain the close co-operation of Britain. That was the dream even of my boyhood.' Mr. Ward Price promised Herr Hitler that he would not make any public use of this interview. Cf. No. 68 concerning his earlier interview with Herr Hitler on March 9.

² Mr. Ward Price flew to London early on March 14 and made his views available to the Foreign Office in a memorandum of that date (C 1939/4/18).

No. 148

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 20, 9.45 p.m.)

No. 114 Telegraphic [C 2167/4/18]

BERLIN, March 20, 1936, 9 p.m.

Your telegram No. 65.¹

My impression is that at the moment Herr Hitler is anxious to make things easy for His Majesty's Government and this may have influenced him in speaking to Mr. Ward Price as he did. Military Attaché thinks that general staff is endeavouring to influence Herr Hitler in this sense. Nevertheless Germany has recently shown that she was jealous of Franco-British military conversations (see my telegram No. 8 of January 15th).²

Definite answer can only be obtained by a direct question to Herr Hitler or possibly to Herr von Ribbentrop.³

¹ No. 147.

² Not printed.

³ Minutes on this telegram showed agreement with Mr. Sargent's comment on March 23 that this was 'obviously not the moment to raise the matter personally with either Herr Hitler or Herr Ribbentrop'.

No. 149

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 355 [C 2171/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 20, 1936

Sir,

Herr von Ribbentrop asked to see me this morning when he stated that he had read carefully the text which I had sent him last night.¹ He must tell me at once that it was quite impossible for the German Government to accept it. He wished in addition to ask me one most important question. Was this text an agreement which could not be modified? Was it merely presented to Germany? If so, since Germany would be clearly unable to accept it, then he would immediately have to take an aeroplane back to Berlin. I asked Herr von Ribbentrop whether he was delivering a message from the German Government as a result of the study by his Government of the proposals? He replied that his Government had not yet had time to study the proposals—they were at present being translated—but he had telephoned some parts of the text and he was sure that the impression that he had given me would be the one which would be made upon the German Government: that these proposals were impossible of acceptance by the German Government.

I said that I very much hoped that Herr von Ribbentrop might yet be mistaken in his estimate of his Government's attitude. These texts were

¹ See No. 145 and *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

certainly not in the nature of a *dictat* to Germany, far from it, they were proposals and they were so called. I did not conceal from Herr von Ribbentrop that I hoped that the German Government would be in a position to accept these proposals. If, unhappily, they were not, then I hoped his Government would assist us in our task by making some positive contribution to improve the situation. The German Government would surely appreciate how very much the French and Belgium Governments have modified their position within the last few days, and in those circumstances I felt fully justified in asking the German Government to make some contribution also. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that he fully appreciated all the efforts which His Majesty's Government had made, but he feared that that did not alter the fundamentals of the position which was that these texts contained several proposals which were quite unacceptable to the German Government. I again urged him to view the situation objectively in the light of the situation created by Germany's unilateral action. Finally I mentioned that I had to make a statement in the House of Commons this afternoon and I agreed with Herr von Ribbentrop the text of what I should say in respect of his visits to me.²

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

² See 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 842-8.

No. 150

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Mr. Eden (Received March 23)

No. 159 [C 2200/4/18]

BRUSSELS, March 20, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Prime Minister made a statement in the Belgian Chamber this afternoon in the course of which he described the meeting of the League Council in London and summarised the terms of the agreement reached by Great Britain, France, Belgium and Italy relating to Germany's violation of the treaties of Versailles and Locarno.¹

2. M. van Zeeland stated that the unanimous condemnation by the League Council of Germany's breach of her treaty engagements had left an indelible impression on him and all those present. He said that it was not possible for him to prognosticate whether Germany would accept the conditions offered but he believed that she 'could and should accept'. Complete unity reigned in the councils of the four above-named countries and in his opinion there was cause for being optimistic about a final satisfactory settlement. It had been proved that it was a serious matter to run counter to international law and he ventured so far as to say that he thought

¹ See No. 144.

the risk of war had been eliminated by the conclusion of the agreement of the four countries. Perhaps the Prime Minister was most applauded when he referred to Great Britain's undertaking to come to the assistance of France and Belgium in case of unprovoked attack by Germany and her consent to the establishment of contact between the British, French and Belgian General Staffs. M. van Zeeland said that this was the first time in history, he thought, that Great Britain had ever pledged her word in writing before 'the event'. ('Pour la première fois dans l'histoire, l'Angleterre se prononce pour une hypothèse qui pourrait se réaliser'.)

3. I saw the Prime Minister for a few minutes after he had made his speech, when he expressed his satisfaction over the result of the meeting in London. He expressed admiration at the calm and methodical manner in which matters were handled by you and your assistants. He confirmed all that he had said in his speech, a summary of which as given in 'Le Soir' is enclosed,² and added that he had not concealed anything in it which could in any way detract from his feeling of relief that the risk of war had now definitely passed.

I have, &c.,
ESMOND OVEY

² Not printed. Foreign Office telegram No. 36 of March 23 instructed Sir E. Ovey to send a full textual translation of the speech.

No. 151

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received March 22, 11.45 a.m.)
No. 123 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 2479/45/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, March 21, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs came to see me later and explained that protest in these terms had been telegraphed to Geneva and to London direct and handed to all Legations here. He begged to transmit through you to His Majesty's Government, since the Council of the League was meeting in London, a special appeal to do everything possible to put a stop to the use of gas by Italians.²

He declared nothing would deter the Emperor from continuing to lead

¹ Sir S. Barton's telegram No. 122 of March 22 forwarded the translation of a memorandum of March 20 in which the Ethiopian Government protested formally to Great Britain as a contracting party under the Hague Convention No. 4 of 1907 and the Geneva Protocol of June 17 1925 against the continued use of gas attacks by Italy.

² The text of the Ethiopian protest of March 17 is printed in *L.N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, p. 455. Foreign Office telegram No. 122 of March 27 informed Sir S. Barton that the Committee of Thirteen had decided at its meeting on March 23 to refer the Ethiopian protest to the Italian Government and to remind the latter of the existence of the gas protocol of 1925: cf. Volume XV, No. 102, and No. 158 below.

his army and people in the fight for defence of the country and its independence and they were prepared to maintain this struggle in spite of enormous disparity in armament and resources. Exposed to chemical warfare they were completely defenceless and its use quite apart from its illegality must surely be repugnant to the opinion of the whole world, while the moment chosen for its intensive application, just after the League's appeal for conciliation, was a further cynical affront to this opinion.

It is certain that use of gas by the Italians with its accompanying ghastly horror and now extended to the southern front has aroused feeling in this country to an extent hitherto unknown and if continued it will not only destroy any hope of a permanent settlement between the two countries but is bound to react on relations between white and colour[ed] races everywhere.

No. 152

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 69 Telegraphic [C 2191/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 21, 1936, 2 p.m.*

Herr von Ribbentrop told me this morning that he is returning to Berlin this afternoon to consult his Government.

I expressed the hope that he would not give the impression to the press that he was not coming back.¹

On enquiring today of the German Delegation we were told that there were no points in the White Paper² on which they required further explanations.

¹ In another account of this conversation Mr. Eden said that he had drawn Herr von Ribbentrop's attention to a leader in *The Times* of March 21 (p. 13) entitled 'Germany's Turn' which seemed to him 'exactly to represent the position'.

² See No. 144.

No. 153

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 84¹ Telegraphic [C 2187/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 21, 1936*

My telegram No. 80.²

Council met in private session yesterday afternoon.

The President read a letter which I had addressed to him communicating to the members of the Council the text of proposals which are drawn up by the representatives of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy and

¹ No. 14 Saving to Berlin, No. 24 Saving to Rome, No. 9 Saving to Brussels.

² No. 142.

which had been submitted to their respective governments.³ The proposals had been laid as a White Paper earlier in the day.

A discussion on procedure then took place in which all the members present except the German representative took part.

The Polish, Spanish and Turkish and Portuguese representatives took the view that in dealing with the draft resolution which it was proposed to submit to the Council the normal council procedure should be followed namely a general discussion followed by the appointment of a Rapporteur or Rapporteurs. The Polish representative categorically reserved his Government's opinion both on the substance of the proposals and on procedure.

There was also a general desire for an adjournment to permit of a careful study of the proposals, and to enable members of the Council to obtain instructions.

To avoid misconception I explained to the Council that they were not confronted with a resolution or even a draft resolution. No submission to the Council had been made and could not be made until the proposals had been accepted by the governments concerned. There was no lack of courtesy to the Council, but the proposals had been circulated as soon as possible for the information of Members. I asked the Council to remember the gravity of the international situation; to refrain from a lengthy debate on procedure, and to adjourn for a brief interval for careful study of the proposals.

The French and Roumanian representatives pressed for an early discussion of the substance of the proposals. M. Titulescu also hoped that the German representative would make his views known.

After further debate the Council decided to adjourn until Monday afternoon March 23rd. On the proposal of the Danish representative it was agreed that the representatives of the Locarno Powers should be asked to give supplementary explanation of their proposals. They would be followed by those members of the Council who were in a position to put forward the observations of their Governments.⁴

³ No. 144.

⁴ There is a full report of this meeting, which was held at the Palace of St. James at 5 p.m. on March 20, in *L/N.O.J., op. cit.*, pp. 341-6.

No. 154

Record by Mr. Wigram of a conversation with M. Massigli

[C 2211/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 21, 1936*

M. Massigli came in this morning and asked me to draw the Secretary of State's attention to the passage in M. Flandin's speech in the Chamber¹ which read:

¹ This speech of March 20 was summarized in *The Times*, March 21, 1936, p. 11.

'Is it necessary for me to add finally that there is no question of the possibility of an International Force occupying any part of French or Belgian territory. That would be a monstrous crime which could never have been accepted by a French negotiator who has no lesson in patriotism to learn from those whose extraordinary action has only complicated his task in the course of the laborious negotiations in which he was serving France. Against that formal repudiation, the other signatory Powers affirm on March 16th that Locarno exists.'

M. Massigli told me that this passage was not in the original draft of M. Flandin's speech but had been put in on his return to Paris where he found a very violent feeling against the suggestion that international troops should be put equally in French and Belgian territory.² M. Massigli pointed out that this would penalise France in compelling her to withdraw a few kilometres from her frontier while Germany would have all the advantage of her unilateral violation of the demilitarised zone up to within a few kilometres of her frontier.

M. Massigli, who said that in what followed he was not speaking on instructions, added, as a personal suggestion, that if the Germans refused to accept the International Force then the corollary would be to ask them to keep their own troops further back from the frontier than the 20 kilometre zone proposed, i.e. 50 or 60 kilometres.

He said that he would have thought it on the whole increasingly difficult for the French to accept an International Force on their side of the frontier, even as Guarantors of Locarno.

² Cf. No. 115.

No. 155

Record by Mr. Wigram of a conversation with Herr Dieckhoff

[C 2293/4/18]

- FOREIGN OFFICE, March 21, 1936

Herr Dieckhoff lunched with me today so I asked him why the German press was reacting so strongly against the proposal of the Four Powers. He had already told me that Baron von Neurath had telephoned to him this morning to say how taken aback he was by the proposal, and how surprised he (Herr Dieckhoff) and Herr Ribbentrop had been when the Secretary of State communicated the proposal.

Herr Dieckhoff said that it was first necessary to consider the psychological reaction in Germany. The proposal in the way it was presented and worded in certain places 'smelt of Versailles'. It was necessary to appreciate the extreme sensitiveness of the German people in this respect. I reminded Herr Dieckhoff of the efforts which we were making prior to the German action on March 7th to initiate discussions between the three Western Powers: and I told him how very carefully we were considering the best way of initiating

these discussions so as to prevent the impression gaining ground in Germany that she was presented with anything like an Anglo-French front. But the German action had upset all that; and now it was with French, not German, scruples that we were primarily concerned.

Herr Dieckhoff then explained the points of detail on which the Germans felt most strongly.

(1) the reference to the Court. There was not only the legal aspect of the question, but also the political aspect. Nobody could suppose the Germans were going out of the Rhineland even if the Court found against them: and if that happened the German position would be rendered even more difficult. Herr Dieckhoff seemed to realise that the reference to the Court would be of value to French opinion as a means of gaining time, but he said it was very difficult for the German Government to refer to a foreign Court (in which they had none too much confidence) what was a 'life and death' matter for Germany. He remarked that of course the Court might avoid giving its verdict until the general negotiations between the Locarno Powers had started. (See on this point a remark made to me some days ago by M. Massigli that the great thing was that the Court should not report until after the French elections, then even if the Court found against Germany and Germany refused to leave the Rhineland the matter could be discussed in the general negotiations.¹)

(2) the demand upon the Germans not to fortify the zone during the negotiations. Herr Dieckhoff said this interfered with German equality of rights and was not acceptable. One day the Germans probably would fortify the zone: but first the military authorities would have to prepare the plans—that would take them at least a year—so that in fact there would be no fortification during the period of negotiation. But the German Government could not give a promise not to fortify: that was inequality and a dangerous precedent.

(3) the stationing of the international troops. That was inequality and unacceptable unless the French had similar troops on their side. Herr Dieckhoff said everyone knew the French would never accept this. (On this point see my conversation with M. Massigli today, in which he suggested that if the Germans would not accept the international troops, they should be asked to withdraw to say 50 kilometres from the frontier.)²

(4) Herr Dieckhoff also drew attention to the inequality implied in asking the Germans not to reinforce a zone in which there were 2 divisions, while the French were only asked not to reinforce a zone in which there were 15 divisions.

Finally Herr Dieckhoff said he had spoken of course only privately and he did not wish to be quoted. We ought to realise that it was not certain that Herr Ribbentrop would return at all; or if he returned he might only return for a day to close the discussion; or of course he might return to negotiate.

¹ See No. 114.

² See No. 154.

No. 156

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 22, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 119 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2197/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, *March 22, 1936*

Your telegram No. 72¹ of to-day.

Chancellor is at Breslau but I have urged Minister for Foreign Affairs to put these considerations before him tomorrow (Monday) morning and this he has promised to do.

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me that Herr von Ribbentrop will return to London Monday evening or Tuesday morning with Chancellor's reply. I also drew His Excellency's attention to the article in question.²

¹ In this telegram Mr. Eden referred to No. 152 and said that he would 'be grateful for any help you can give us in urging upon German Government importance of not returning flat negative to proposals. . .'

² See No. 152, note 1.

No. 157

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 23, 11.4 a.m.)

No. 120 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2207/4/18]

BERLIN, *March 23, 1936*

The impression given by the messages of London correspondents is that public opinion in England is very critical of the Locarno memorandum. In particular, it is said, objection is taken to the proposal for an international force. There is also evidence of a widespread feeling there against an Anglo-French alliance.

On the other hand, the messages state, emphasis is laid by British newspapers on the fact that the memorandum is only a basis of discussion and the German government are not expected to accept it as it stands.

Telegrams from Paris represent the French as disturbed at the attitude of British public opinion. It is feared in Paris that the memorandum may share the fate of the Hoare-Laval plan.¹

¹ Minutes on this telegram by Mr. Wigram, Mr. R. A. Leeper, head of the News Department of the Foreign Office, and Sir R. Vansittart were as follows. 'This, of course, makes it quite certain that the German attitude will be stiffened & agreement rendered more difficult. Our press have not helped. R. F. W. 23/3.' 'Some influential newspapers have been excellent e.g. *Daily Telegraph*, *Morning Post*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Birmingham Post*, but the Germans of course ignore them. On the whole the press are much better than their readers & would be much better still with a strong lead from the Govt. R. A. Leeper. 25/3.' 'I quite agree. I hope the Govt. will give it. R. V.'

*Record of Meeting of Committee of Thirteen held at St. James's Palace,
March 23, at 10.30 a.m.¹*

[J 2554/587/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 23, 1936

THE CHAIRMAN (M. de Madariaga) referred to the answers received from the Italian and Ethiopian Governments to the appeal which the Committee had addressed to them at its last meeting.² He also referred to a more recent communication from the Ethiopian Government which contained a refusal of direct negotiations with the Italian Government.³ M. de Madariaga briefly outlined the situation as it appeared from these documents, and said that the Committee was called upon to (1) consider the replies of the Governments; (2) deal with complaints of the Ethiopian Government in regard to the bombing of Red Cross units and the use of asphyxiating gases;⁴ and (3) decide upon its programme of work.

THE AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVE (Mr. Bruce) enquired the intention of the Committee in making the appeal to the two governments. What was the procedure which the Committee proposed to follow in the event of entirely satisfactory replies being received? Should the Committee now proceed on the assumption that the replies were favourable or should the Italian Government be asked whether Italian acceptance and negotiations 'in principle' implied that they were willing to negotiate within the framework of the Covenant? He thought the task of the Committee was not to ask too many questions but to endeavour to make peace.

THE POLISH REPRESENTATIVE (M. Komarnicki) proposed that the Chairman should be authorised to get into touch with the two parties and obtain fuller information as to their attitude. The Committee could not proceed until fuller information was obtained.

THE UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE (Mr. Eden) questioned whether it was fair to place the whole onus of the Committee's task on the Chairman's shoulders. He thought the Committee should give some guidance to its Chairman in his difficult task. He agreed that the Committee should proceed on the assumption that the replies constituted acceptance, and that the Chairman and the Secretary-General should get into touch with the two parties. Some guidance should be given at this stage as to the lines on which a negotiation could proceed.

THE PORTUGUESE REPRESENTATIVE (M. Monteiro) said that the proposal to appeal to the two parties came from the French representative, and that

¹ No minutes of this meeting are printed in *L/N.O.J.* There is a reference to the meeting and detailed account of the subsequent negotiations down to April 18, 1936, in *ibid.*, pp. 359-73.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 395-6; cf. No. 30, note 2.

³ In a letter from M. Wolde Mariam to the Secretary-General of the League dated March 20, 1936: *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 396-8. Cf. No. 103.

⁴ *L/N.O.J.*, *ibid.*, pp. 437, 455; cf. Nos. 89 and 151.

it was important that the Committee should know the attitude of the French Government. The invitation to negotiate within the framework of the Covenant was specifically accepted by the Abyssinian Government but only accepted in principle by the Italian Government. The Committee must assume that the Italian Government had agreed to negotiate within the framework of the Covenant. The Committee had already in its possession a basis of negotiation drawn up by the Committee of Five.⁵ Meanwhile, war continued. The Committee must take into account the effect of its action on public opinion and endeavour to stop hostilities before beginning negotiations. He thought, therefore, that the first task of the Committee was to address an appeal for the cessation of hostilities to the two governments.

M. DE MADARIAGA considered that the Committee had not yet reached the point when negotiations could begin. It was necessary to get further information from the parties before progress could be made. He envisaged three stages. In the first information would be obtained from the parties; in the second the Committee of Thirteen would meet; in the third, negotiations would actually begin. He did not exclude an immediate appeal for the cessation of hostilities.

THE FRENCH REPRESENTATIVE (M. Paul-Boncour) said that the object of the French Government was to make peace as soon as possible. He did not think that this was an appropriate moment for the Committee to give instructions as to the lines on which negotiations should proceed. Accordingly, he supported the Chairman's proposal.

M. MONTEIRO repeated that public opinion had placed great hope in the work of the Committee. It would not be good for the prestige of the League if at this moment the Committee did nothing except obtain information. It must at once formulate an idea for a basis of negotiation. At present the parties had been asked to negotiate but no one had any idea of what they were to negotiate upon. The Committee must accept its responsibilities and not pass them to its Chairman. He thought there should be a small committee. If it were impossible to give instructions to the committee at the moment, then it should at least be constituted.

M. DE MADARIAGA did not see a great difference between his proposal and that made by M. Monteiro.

M. MONTEIRO objected to this view. In his opinion the Committee which was constituted should be given a fairly wide latitude of action.

MR. EDEN agreed that it would be useful if the Chairman was assisted by a small committee.

M. DE MADARIAGA said that neither the Chairman nor a small committee could proceed to negotiate without being given by the full Committee some idea of the minimum and maximum terms. It would therefore be necessary for the Committee at some stage to give more precise instructions.

MR. EDEN suggested that the Chairman or the committee should take as a point of departure the proposals of the Committee of Five.

THE SOVIET REPRESENTATIVE (M. Litvinov) said that other events had

⁵ See Volume XIV, No. 641, note 4.

overshadowed the work of the Committee of Thirteen. The problem raised by the Ethiopian war was not so acute as it had been, and the Committee was therefore irresolute in action. A programme of negotiation could not be put forward at the moment and the Committee should content itself with instructing its Chairman, or a committee, to bring the parties together and sound them. He fully supported M. Komarnicki's proposal.

THE ROUMANIAN REPRESENTATIVE (M. Antoniade) thought that the first phase of the Committee's work should consist in obtaining preliminary information. It was premature to lay down definite limits within which a negotiation should proceed. He did not share M. Monteiro's fear of public opinion. He fully supported M. Komarnicki's proposal.

MR. BRUCE agreed with M. Monteiro that the Committee should do nothing to impair the prestige of the League, but he thought that the proposal made by M. Madariaga could be put in such a way as not to shock public opinion.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR agreed except on the point of the appointment of a small committee. He was opposed to the further multiplication of committees to deal with the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. The replies of the two parties gave an opportunity of carrying on negotiations, but the time had not yet come for the Committee of Thirteen to assume its responsibilities.

THE TURKISH REPRESENTATIVE (M. Aras) pointed out that happily the Committee of Five no longer existed.

M. KOMARNICKI considered it useless to reconstitute the Committee of Five.

MR. EDEN pointed out that the Committee of Five had done a very important piece of work.

M. MONTEIRO said that there were two opinions as to the competence the Chairman, or the proposed committee, should have. In one view they were simply to obtain information; in the other, they would endeavour to reach a formula of settlement and then report to the Committee of Thirteen. He was opposed to the first course, more especially because if the obtaining of information was the only objective there was no basis for an invitation to the parties to cease hostilities.

M. ARAS agreed that the first object was to obtain information from the parties. In doing so the Chairman might be asked to be guided by the work of various organs of the Council.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR saw no reason for the appointment of a new committee.

MR. EDEN said that the timetable was important. A bad impression would be created if the Committee of Thirteen only instructed its Chairman to obtain information and made no arrangements for another meeting. He thought a small committee would be useful.

M. DE MADARIAGA agreed, but thought it would be dangerous to give it too wide a mandate. The great difficulty of the moment was to find a basis for negotiation. He did not at the present stage see much difference between obtaining information and negotiation.

M. LITVINOV stressed the importance of bringing the parties together.

The parties, not the League, would have to establish the conditions of peace. He was opposed to the appointment of a new committee. It was only necessary to give instructions to the executive organ of the Committee.

MR. EDEN asked whether the object was to induce the two parties to negotiate. If it was, he pointed out that Ethiopia had already refused to enter into direct negotiations.

M. LITVINOV said that there had been rumours that negotiations had been going on and that this was denied. But if the Chairman brought the parties together they would be negotiating within the framework of the League.

M. DE MADARIAGA thought that the text of a resolution might now be drawn up. He asked the Members of the Committee whether they were in favour of entrusting the Chairman and the Secretary-General with the task of obtaining information from the parties, or whether a small committee should be appointed. The opinion of the Committee was strongly in favour of entrusting the task to the Chairman and the Secretary-General.

M. DE MADARIAGA then read the text of a formula which he had prepared.

M. KOMARNICKI said it was premature at this stage to assign a definite task to the Committee of Thirteen. There was no reason why the Committee should now decide that it should at some future time draw up recommendations for submission to the parties.

After some further discussion the Committee adopted the following formula:

'The Committee of Thirteen takes note of the replies given by the two parties to the dispute to the appeal addressed to them on March 3rd. It requests its Chairman, assisted by the Secretary-General, to get into touch with the two parties and to take such steps as may be called for in order that the Committee may be able, as soon as possible, to bring the two parties together and, within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant, to bring about the prompt cessation of hostilities and the final restoration of peace.'⁶

M. DE MADARIAGA then referred to the complaints which had been made by the Ethiopian Government with regard to the bombing of the Red Cross, and the use of poison gas in contravention of the Gas Protocol of 1925, of which both Italy and Ethiopia were signatories.

M. DE MADARIAGA proposed that the complaints of the Ethiopian Government should be referred to the Italian Government and that the Italian Government should be reminded of the existence of the Gas Protocol.⁷

As regards the appeal to the parties for cessation of hostilities, it was agreed that the formula drawn up by the Committee was sufficient.

As regards future procedure, M. DE MADARIAGA suggested that while the Committee should certainly meet again as soon as possible, it should not take a definite decision at the moment as to the date of its next meeting.⁸

⁶ The text of the resolution was sent to Sir S. Barton on March 24 in Foreign Office telegram No. 115, repeated to Paris (No. 90), and Rome (No. 25 Saving).

⁷ Cf. No. 151, note 2.

⁸ In his despatch No. 139 of March 23 to Sir H. Chilton, H.M. Ambassador in Madrid,

Mr. Eden said that he had that day seen Señor de Madariaga, who had said that 'if ever the question of sanctions were raised by the Italians, he would immediately refer back to the Committee [of Thirteen]. He had been much perturbed by M. Litvinov's attitude and his suggestion that the Abyssinians should be encouraged to negotiate direct with Italy.'

No. 159

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 24)

No. 396 [C 2239/4/18]

PARIS, March 23, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to report that a member of my staff had a long conversation with M. Caillaux on March 21st.¹

2. M. Caillaux stated that, contrary to what was asserted in the salons of Paris, French public opinion was much more favourable to Great Britain than might perhaps be realised in England or in English circles in France. Any feeling which might have been aroused among the French people, as opposed to the salons, had been occasioned far more by the application of sanctions to Italy which had hit countless people in their pockets and had indeed in those parts of France adjacent to the Italian border brought about the ruin of a great many houses which depended on trade with Italy. M. Caillaux observed incidentally that the salons had never represented the country less than at the present time.

3. M. Caillaux said that in parliamentary circles and among the political parties whose representatives he happened to have seen, it had been realised that our rather slow methods had staved off the adoption of measures which would have resulted in war, for in his opinion a French mobilisation would have certainly brought about war.

4. M. Caillaux thought that the only thing which would keep Herr Hitler in order was a defensive alliance between Great Britain, Belgium and France. He himself would have preferred to have gone to The Hague Court before signing the Franco-Soviet Pact, but he had been overruled. It was, however, said that the Franco-Soviet Pact had been only the pretext on which Herr Hitler had hung his remilitarisation of the Rhineland, and had the Permanent Court of International Justice given its blessing to the Pact the Führer would have found some other reason for occupying the demilitarised zone—out of which M. Caillaux was certain nothing would budge him.

5. M. Caillaux believed that it was essential to talk with Germany and that the vast majority of his compatriots agreed with him. He said that no attention should be paid to what was published in the newspapers other than the 'Echo de Paris', 'Figaro', 'Matin', 'Paris-Midi', 'Paris-Soir' and

¹ Mr. Wigram remarked in a minute of March 24: 'It is satisfactory to see the Paris Embassy waking up again.' Cf. No. 129, note 5. The revival was ascribed to the return of Sir Charles Mendl, the Press Attaché, from America.

'Petit Parisien'. The articles appearing in 'Jour', 'Journal des Débats' and 'Liberté' were absolutely valueless. At disappointment being expressed at the general tone of the French press and at its lukewarmness in the face of the very considerable efforts made by His Majesty's Government in London to meet the French point of view M. Caillaux promised to say what he could to improve matters to the proprietors of the newspapers with whom he was on friendly terms.

6. M. Caillaux suggested that His Majesty's Government should attempt to use their influence to induce the South American States (in particular Argentine, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) to admit German and Italian emigrants. France, he said, had lost her influence in South America but Great Britain still enjoyed a great deal and should make use of it for the end indicated.

7. M. Caillaux also stated that it was necessary to give the Germans some colonies. In reply to a question M. Caillaux said that France would be prepared to give up those parts of the Cameroons and Togoland for which she held the mandates, if His Majesty's Government would also give up a mandated area, say Tanganyika (M. Caillaux mentioned Tanganyika as it was apparently the only ex-German colony for which the mandate was, to his knowledge, held by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom; he did not appear to realise that His Majesty's Government also hold mandates in respect of the smaller portions of the Cameroons and Togoland). It would be impossible to induce France to give up anything unless Great Britain also made a contribution.

8. Altogether M. Caillaux showed himself willing to work in complete harmony with His Majesty's Government (as he has indeed declared himself to do for the last few years). He said that every thinking Frenchman knew that only by means of close cooperation with Great Britain was salvation possible. He hoped that no time would be lost in calling off the sanctions imposed on Italy. They had, he said, done enough harm already and in any case the rains in Ethiopia would hold up the war, if indeed they did not result in preventing further successful military operations by the Italians. While he agreed that sanctions against Germany would be as useless as had been the sanctions against Italy, he felt that the French people would not understand the maintenance of sanctions against Italy if they were not found to be applicable in present circumstances to Germany also.²

I have, etc.,

GEORGE R. CLERK

² In a minute of March 27 Sir R. Vansittart wrote that 'this interview with M. Caillaux has some very satisfactory features . . . I hope the Embassy will continue to cultivate M. Caillaux & others of the same past or present value. Our attitude will profit by this fairer comprehension of it.' Mr. Eden wrote: 'Paragraph 3 of this paper is important. I believe it to be true, & the justification of our White Paper. A. E. March 28.'

No. 160

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received March 24, 12.55 p.m.)

No. 164 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2256/4/18]

PARIS, March 24, 1936

My telegram No. 163.¹

I learn that Monsieur Flandin on receiving the 'Havas' report of your reply to the question asked by Mr. Adams in the House yesterday,² sent for French journalists and re-stated French Government's position. He said that proposals offered to Germany must be accepted or rejected as a whole and that there could be no middle course. France had gone to the utmost limit in making concessions and intended to make no more.

Press this morning shows some uneasiness at what is considered to be the encouragement now being given to Germany by Great Britain. Attention is drawn to your above-mentioned reply in the House and it is suggested that the debate which was expected has been adjourned because the Government feel that British public opinion is not behind them.

While messages from London correspondents to principal Paris newspapers are on the whole quite moderate general view of press here, which seems to have been supplied with a garbled version of your words, is to interpret your reply as an attempt to get France to show flexibility in the coming negotiations. The answer can only be, it is said, that 'France will show the utmost firmness and this must be made clear at a moment when His Majesty's Government, under pressure of its public opinion, is trying obliquely to extort further concessions from us'.

¹ This telegram of March 23 gave details of French press views on foreign policy at the opening of the election campaign.

² See 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 858-9. Mr. Adams asked Mr. Eden if he had any further statement to make on the European situation; Mr. Eden's reply was a summary of his interview with Herr von Ribbentrop on March 20 (see No. 149).

No. 161

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 91¹ Telegraphic [C 2306/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 24, 1936

My telegram No. 84.²

Council met in private session this afternoon.³

President⁴ proposed that the Council should decide on the future course

¹ No. 15 Saving to Berlin, No. 26 Saving to Rome, No. 10 Saving to Brussels.

² No. 153.

³ At St. James's Palace at 4 p.m. Germany was represented by Herr Dieckhoff. The minutes of this session are printed in *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-7.

⁴ Mr. S. M. Bruce.

of its deliberations. The proposals of the Locarno Powers had been brought as a matter of courtesy before the Council in order to keep them advised of the situation. The document in question was, however, not a submission to the Council, and indeed was still under consideration by one government. There was therefore no definite proposal before the Council, and no appeal under Article 11 of the Covenant. The business of the present extraordinary session, namely the request of the French and Belgian Governments, had been disposed of by the resolution of March 19th. There was no matter actually before the Council for discussion. But the Council had a duty to take any action it might consider necessary for the preservation of peace. He proposed, therefore, that this extraordinary session should not be closed. The Council might adjourn and come together at the earliest possible date on which a further meeting would be useful.

After some discussion the following resolution was adopted:

‘The Council thanks the Representative of the United Kingdom for his communication dated the 20th March, 1936 transmitting the text of proposals drawn up on the 19th March 1936 by the Representatives of the Members of the League who are signatories of the Treaty of Locarno, and which are under consideration by the respective Governments;

considers that any further action on its part should remain in abeyance for the present in view of the conversations which are being carried on;

invites the said Governments to keep it advised of the progress of these conversations;

decides to meet again as soon as circumstances render further consideration of the question desirable.’

The Council then authorised its President to convene it when he considered that circumstances required it.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the adjourned extraordinary session would be held in the ordinary way at Geneva.

No. 162

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 542 [C 2266/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 24, 1936*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this morning, when he stated that he had received a message from M. Flandin¹ that he wished to give to me. M. Flandin was much preoccupied by the interpretation which had been given in certain quarters in the press to the reply which I had returned to a question in the House of Commons yesterday.² These interpretations sought to show that His Majesty's Government did not consider themselves bound by the agreement of March 19th,³ and were even considering varying it in

¹ See *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 489.

² See No. 160, note 2.

³ No. 144.

the light of a possible German reply. The French Government considered the agreement of March 19th as binding between the four Locarno Powers, and thought it, moreover, a mistake to create an impression in Germany that, whatever their answer, that answer would be favourably considered.

2. I replied that I thought that the position as I had stated it in the House of Commons was entirely correct, though, of course, I did not know what interpretation might have been placed upon it in the French press. The documents of the 19th March were, in fact, proposals. They were so called, and I was quite confident that never in the mind of the British negotiators, nor I believed in the mind of any other negotiators, were they considered as a 'diktat' or an ultimatum never to be varied. As evidence of this I reminded the Ambassador that the representatives of the four Powers had deliberately considered, and agreed to, an alternative to the international force on German soil should this proposal be rejected. It had been clearly understood between us that in that event an international force composed of the guarantor Powers only could be stationed on French and Belgian soil. The mere fact that the French representatives had agreed to this variation should the need arise, made it quite clear that they did not regard these proposals as an ultimatum that could not be varied. Moreover, our objective in the present very difficult international situation was to get to an agreement. This, I believed, was the view of the French Government also. The Ambassador assented. It seemed, therefore, clear to me that if, for the sake of argument, the German answer was satisfactory on all clauses but the international force, it would clearly be our duty to try to arrive at some compromise in respect of this proposal. Incidentally, I added that M. Flandin's statement in Paris that the French Government would never agree to an international force on their soil, had made things more difficult for us here.⁴

3. The Ambassador did not deny this, but maintained that the French Government regarded the agreement of March 19th as a compromise in itself. I would remember how many days had been spent in negotiation in order to arrive at it. If we were to suggest that that agreement was not to be effective, then the French Government would be placed in a most embarrassing position. Indeed, M. Flandin wished him to make it clear that, were such circumstances to arise, he would have to claim complete freedom of action for his Government.

4. I replied that all this seemed to me to be travelling rather far and fast, since we had not yet received the German answer. Until we had received that answer we were groping in the dark. When we did receive it, it would be our duty, and no doubt that of the French and Belgian Governments also, carefully to examine it and to consider what was to be done in the situation thus created. In the meanwhile, I would beg the French Government carefully to distinguish between essentials and the trimmings. We had ourselves gone a very long way to meet the French Government in the conversations in London. The White Paper included proposals which would give the French Government certain things that they had never had before.

⁴ Cf. No. 154.

I felt, therefore, that we were justified in reminding the French Government of this, more particularly as the Ambassador himself must be well aware of the state of public opinion in this country at the present time.

5. The Ambassador admitted this, but added that he felt sure that it would not be possible for the French Government to make any further concessions on essential points, and these essential points were set out in the agreement. What he most feared was that the German Government would make some counter proposals which would be on wholly different lines and would throw the whole situation into confusion unless we stood firm by the agreement. In his Government's view, the greatest contribution we could make to Europe at this time was to stand firm by that agreement.

6. I thanked the Ambassador for thus making plain his Government's point of view, and repeated that it did not seem to me that we could usefully carry matters any further until we had received the German Government's answer. I understood that, meanwhile, M. Flandin had gone down to his constituency. Was this so? The Ambassador replied that M. Flandin had to go to his constituency because he was faced with an electoral contest there which might prove difficult for him. He added that the imminence of French elections and also of German elections was a further complication in a difficult international situation. Only we were free and able to play our part unhampered. I agreed as to the additional difficulties created by the elections, but begged him to impress upon his Government that His Majesty's Government had perhaps the most difficult task of all in the present situation.

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

No. 163

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 370 [C 2274/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 24, 1936*

Sir,

Herr von Ribbentrop asked to see me this evening,¹ when he stated that he had a document² which he wished to give on behalf of the German Government, and added that, after I had read it, there were certain supplementary explanations which he wished to give.³

2. Herr von Ribbentrop said that on his return to Berlin he had had a very difficult task. He had explained to Herr Hitler the difficulty of the

¹ He had returned to London that afternoon.

² Not printed here: see *D.G.F.P., op. cit.*, No. 207. This document rejected the proposals of the Locarno Powers for a draft treaty (No. 144) but promised a more exhaustive reply on March 31, after the German plebiscite.

³ For Herr von Ribbentrop's account of the ensuing conversation see *ibid.*, No. 208, and cf. No. 200.

position of His Majesty's Government and emphasised to him the efforts which we had made to moderate the French position. None the less, the proposals of the four Locarno Powers had come as a great shock to the Chancellor. His first reaction had been that in these conditions it was no good attempting to go on. He had wished to maintain the position that he had made his offer as a whole, that the Powers had not responded and that, therefore, there was no more that he could do. Finally, however, largely as a result, Herr von Ribbentrop indicated, of his endeavours, Herr Hitler was persuaded to adopt a more moderate course and to make one final effort to bring about a settlement in the European continent. The success or failure of that effort, however, must in a large measure depend upon His Majesty's Government. Herr von Ribbentrop, in his last interview, had asked me whether His Majesty's Government were really anxious to obtain a European settlement, and I had told him 'Yes'. He had also asked me whether I thought the French Government were anxious for such a settlement and I had told him 'Yes, subject to certain conditions.' (I here intervened to explain that the condition was that some agreement should be reached to cover the interim period pending the negotiations.) The German Government felt in these conditions that negotiations could only really be successful if His Majesty's Government were able to induce the French Government to enter upon them in a spirit which would make success realisable. To do this the French Government must get out of their old frame of mind altogether and be willing to start on an entirely new basis. He felt that His Majesty's Government, who probably did not altogether share the French view about the need for inequality, were in the best position to do this.

3. I replied that the German Government seemed to be placing upon us an extremely onerous task. After all, Herr von Ribbentrop would recall that the proposals of the four Locarno Powers indicated a very remarkable departure from the attitude taken up by the French and Belgian Governments in Paris. In the proposals of March 19th the German Government were asked to make three specific contributions—The Hague Court, the international force, and to refrain from fortifying the zone during the period of negotiations. Was I to understand from this paper that the German Government refused all of these requests?

4. Herr von Ribbentrop then launched out into a long disquisition on sovereignty, and explained that it would be quite impossible for the German Government to agree to maintain their small force of nineteen battalions in the Rhineland opposite the very strong French forces, whose numbers had been largely increased. Herr von Ribbentrop maintained that he knew exactly what the numbers of French troops were—they greatly outnumbered the German forces, and France had mobilised more men to add to their numbers. This was a situation which could not continue indefinitely. While the Chancellor did not wish to withdraw a contribution which he had made, not to increase the number of his troops in the Rhineland, Herr von Ribbentrop indicated that he would look for my help to ensure that the

French Government did not make the German position impossible by increasing their very large forces.

5. I then told Herr von Ribbentrop that in the course of his conversation I had been unable to find any means of meeting our immediate difficulty. What could we offer France and Belgium which would give them the necessary assurance to encourage them to enter into conversations? Was it really impossible for the German Government to say that they would not fortify for the period of the negotiations? Even this would be a contribution. Herr von Ribbentrop held out no hope that the Chancellor could agree to this, but he added that in fact the German Government could not build effective fortifications in a brief period. If this was so, I replied, could not the German Government give us the assurance that they would not put up any such fortifications for the period of negotiations and thus meet one of the conditions laid down in the White Paper? Herr von Ribbentrop could add nothing to his reply, but suggested that we might continue this part of the conversation to-morrow.

6. Herr von Ribbentrop then said that he thought one of the most important items we had to consider was procedure. If these conversations were to take place, and if they were to have a chance of success, it was important, he thought, to tide over the period of the French elections when politicians were in the habit of making speeches of a more violent character than in normal times. Had I any views as to how this was to be done? I said I shared his apprehensions, but I did not see how they were to be met. We, too, had been concerned about the period of the elections both in France and in Germany and I had hoped that it might have been possible to secure a fresh contribution from the German side to enable us together with our own contributions to tide over the period until after the elections. As to this, however, we could not be finally certain now until we knew what the proposals were which were to be produced by the German Government next week.

7. Herr von Ribbentrop added that an advantage in encouraging the French Government to delay their reply until after the French elections was that after the elections were over the French Government could be expected to be more moderate. At the same time he gave no indication that after the German elections the German Government were likely to undergo any similar transformation.

8. Herr von Ribbentrop then described how the Chancellor, who he said was a man who had more ideas than most, had suddenly determined in the course of the next few days, which he was going to spend in various parts of Germany electioneering, that he would produce a final and important document which might enable us to co-operate to settle the problems of the European continent for all time. I was given to understand that this would be a monumental work and that it would take some time for the various Governments concerned to examine it. The refrain with which Herr von Ribbentrop accompanied his lyrical description of this as yet unwritten volume was that if ever it was to receive the consideration and finally the

approval, which he felt sure it would deserve, then Britain and Germany must co-operate together to induce the French Government to receive it, to consider it and finally to accept it.

9. In conclusion, Herr von Ribbentrop stated that he would like to see me again to-morrow in order that we might carry a little further our discussions of to-day.⁴

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

⁴ This despatch was circulated to the Cabinet, which considered it at a meeting on the morning of March 25. The Cabinet approved the general lines of a statement which Mr. Eden proposed to make in the House of Commons, agreed that the General Staffs should be instructed to make contact with the French and Belgian General Staffs, and that Herr von Ribbentrop should be asked whether Mr. Eden might say that the German Government did not object to the proposed staff conversations. He was also to be asked for an undertaking that the German Government would not construct fortifications in the demilitarized zone during the next few months. The Cabinet decided, however, that the letters to be addressed to the representatives of Belgium and France should not be sent until after the Parliamentary debate, and if possible not until after the French general elections.

Mr. Eden made a major speech on the situation in the House of Commons on March 26, and remarks in his memoirs that 'the majority of Members was fervent in support' (Avon, *op. cit.*, p. 362). He appealed to Germany for some constructive solution, gave a brief history of the demilitarized zone, and said that it was a 'vital interest' of Great Britain that no hostile force should cross the frontiers of France or Belgium. See 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1435-49.

No. 164

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 169 [C 2285/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 24, 1936*

Sir,

The Belgian Ambassador¹ asked to see me this morning when he said that he had a message to deliver to me from M. van Zeeland.² The Belgian Prime Minister was of the opinion that in present conditions it was extremely desirable to go slow. He would even have preferred that the German Government should not have been pressed to answer our proposals until after their elections. But this was now impossible. In any event M. van Zeeland thought delay was necessary for French opinion if only to 'dissiper' certain 'malentendus'. I asked the Ambassador if he knew what M. van Zeeland had in mind by this phrase. The Ambassador said he supposed that it was the attitude which the French Government had taken up that these were definitive agreements between us. The Belgian Prime Minister had made a somewhat similar statement in Brussels. But on the other hand, His Excellency added, it had to be realised that they were in the nature of an

¹ Baron de Cartier de Marchienne.

² Cf. *D.D.B.*, *op. cit.*, No. 51; cf. No. 50.

'avant projet' and that the Italian Government had not as yet approved them in any way.

2. The Ambassador went on to say that it was M. van Zeeland's view that the second stage of our negotiations had better be postponed until next week. If, however, I was very anxious to see him it would be possible for M. van Zeeland to leave Brussels on Wednesday night and arrive in London on Thursday morning. He was afraid, however, that if he were to come and M. Flandin were not to do so, then the position might be a somewhat embarrassing one.

3. I replied that the position was indeed complicated, and it was difficult to say much to straighten it out pending the receipt of the German answer. I did not think, however, from the French point of view that next week would be any better for discussion than this. On the contrary it might be rather worse, as the election campaign would by then be in full swing. If it were possible so to contrive it the idea of a solution seemed to me to be to try and advance so far this week as to enable us to visualise a definite meeting of the Locarno Powers say in May, and then adjourn from this week until that date. This programme however was likely to prove very difficult to realise. I asked the Ambassador to thank M. van Zeeland for his message and to tell him that I would communicate with him again as soon as I had received the German reply, when I thought it quite possible that I might have to call upon him to help me by coming to London this week.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

No. 165

Mr. Eden to Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade)

No. 93 [C 2273/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 24, 1936*

Sir,

M. Pouritch, the Yugoslav representative on the Committee of Thirteen, asked to see me this afternoon, when he stated he was anxious to know my views as to the immediate future of the conversations between the Locarno Powers. I replied that it was difficult to give his Excellency much information pending the arrival of Herr von Ribbentrop,¹ but, in my view, it was difficult to hope to make very much progress in the next few weeks. The French elections were always the most difficult time for a French Government, and if any important progress was now to be realised careful diplomatic preparation would probably be required. M. Pouritch entirely concurred in this view, and added that he thought it essential now to attempt to gain time.

2. M. Pouritch then spoke of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, and reiterated

¹ Cf. No. 163, note 1.

the view, frequently expressed by Yugoslav representatives, that he thought it would be well to allow Signor Mussolini to exhaust himself in Africa. He was not anxious to see the war brought to an end before the rains. Signor Mussolini had recently been very active in Albania, had lent more money to King Zog, had strengthened Albanian fortifications, and, M. Pouritch feared, was seeking to create an Albanian irredentist movement in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Government was not unduly perturbed by these activities, but M. Pouritch gave me the impression that they would not be sorry to see Mussolini occupied in Abyssinia for some time to come. I replied that I hoped that the war would be over before the autumn, for it was causing some terrible suffering in Abyssinia.

3. I asked M. Pouritch about sanctions, for it was in my view impossible to take off sanctions, anxious though we all must be to be rid of them, unless fighting stopped and there was some real prospect of peace. Would it be possible for the nations who did most trade with Italy to continue sanctions right through till the autumn? The strain upon all must be severe. M. Pouritch said that he did not anticipate much difficulty in this. The nations had got used to sanctions, and they could, he thought, be continued without intolerable hardship. I clearly derived the impression that M. Pouritch preferred the discomfort and loss of trade entailed by sanctions to the possibility of Signor Mussolini being free perhaps to make trouble in Albania. He emphasised that Signor Mussolini was not in any event a peace-loving being in these days.

4. Finally, his Excellency asked me whether there was any advice I could give him as to the attitude his Government should take in the present conversations between the Locarno Powers. I replied that I thought the Yugoslav Government, like ourselves and like Belgium, had everything to gain from a peaceful and enduring solution of the present trouble, and I felt sure that I could count upon him to do anything he could to help us.

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

No. 166

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 93 Telegraphic [C 2338/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 25, 1936, 3.50 p.m.*

In a brief conversation at the Council table¹ Monsieur Paul-Boncour remarked to me that there was one point which he wished to make absolutely clear. It might be in France's power to make concessions here and there but upon one issue she could in no circumstances give way. No French Government could ever agree to allow Germany to fortify the zone. For if

¹ This conversation took place on March 24, evidently at the time of the meeting of the League of Nations Council that afternoon: see No. 161.

that were to happen and Germany were to erect a marginal [? Maginot] line opposite the French line then France would not be in a position to fulfil any of her commitments in Central and Eastern Europe.²

Repeated to Berlin No. 79, Brussels No. 42, Rome No. 102, Moscow No. 47.

² M. Paul-Boncour elaborated this point in a more extended conversation with Mr. Eden on the morning of March 25 (C 2307/4/18). Mr. Eden replied that he quite understood the French position but that 'it was no good concealing from ourselves that it was a point on which the German Government would also prove very hard and uncompromising'. Earlier in the conversation, when M. Paul-Boncour asserted that 'unless an effective halt were called to German encroachments at some point, there would inevitably be a European war in a couple of years', Mr. Eden and Sir R. Vansittart 'strongly contested this view and it was pointed out to M. Paul-Boncour that the prospects of peace in Europe depended very largely on the wisdom and unity of those chiefly concerned in its preservation'.

No. 167

Sir H. Chilton (Madrid) to Mr. Eden (Received March 26, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 72 Telegraphic [W 2678/62/41]

Very Confidential

MADRID, March 25, 1936, 10.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 51.¹

The Franco-Soviet Agreement has undoubtedly had serious repercussion here. The Prime Minister² yesterday postponed for a second time the debate in the Cortes on the maintenance of public order because at the last moment he did not wish to give full information on the subject, fearing lest this should afford provocation to the extreme left, extreme right and Fascists.

2. The Minister of State told one of my colleagues today that should the extreme left win at the municipal elections on April 12th Señor Largo Caballero, the extreme Socialist leader, would turn out the President of the Republic and the Government and set up a Soviet régime in Spain, but that he would probably be the first victim of his own party. As the Spanish people do not desire a communist régime, I do not think that such a form of government, if it is ever established, would be of long duration.

3. At any rate, to prevent this the army are said to be plotting a coup d'état under a distinguished general, whose name has not been divulged. This will presumably take place, if at all, before April 12th. If it succeeds, it will be interesting to see what happens. If it fails, there will be chaos and anarchy, as may also be the case, for a time at any rate, if the elections go in favour of the extreme left.

4. On the other hand, as the unexpected so often happens in Spain, there may be a reaction in favour of a more moderate policy, and nothing serious may happen.

5. In view of the rumoured intention of the army, I am asking the

¹ Of March 21, not printed.

² Señor Manuel Azaña.

Military Attaché³ to come here, or send the Assistant Military Attaché, as soon as possible, as I need someone who can be in touch with the military authorities. The Military Attaché was to have come on April 12th, but that will be too late.

³ Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Beaumont-Nesbitt was Military Attaché at Madrid, Paris, and Lisbon (see No. 46, note 1).

No. 168

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 376 [C 2312/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 25, 1936*

Sir,

I asked Herr von Ribbentrop to come and see me this afternoon, when I told him that the Cabinet this morning had carefully considered recent developments in the international situation.¹ I felt bound to tell him that we were still extremely preoccupied by its gravity. We would of course await the Chancellor's full proposals next week. At the same time it was clear that the interim answer returned by the German Government contained no contribution whatever to meet the very real difficulties of the interim period before negotiations could begin. We had been attempting to find some method of doing this, and I had two suggestions to put to Herr von Ribbentrop in this connexion.

2. First Herr von Ribbentrop would see that Article 3 of the London Proposals² dealt with the immediate situation created by Germany's denunciation of the Locarno Treaty previous to the negotiations which we all hoped to see realised. The first part of that paragraph was a reaffirmation of Locarno on our account. The second half visualised Staff conversations strictly for the purpose of providing against acts of unprovoked aggression. I had a fairly clear recollection that more than once the German Chancellor had said, I thought to myself among others, that he would have no objection to arrangements such as these since Germany did not contemplate an aggression. In these circumstances I should be grateful if Herr von Ribbentrop would ask his Government whether they could express the fact that they had no objection in this instance. I should be particularly grateful for such an assurance just before the debate. I impressed upon Herr von Ribbentrop that the German negative to each of the three proposals put forward to meet the immediate situation made it imperative to find some other contribution to help to create such an international atmosphere as would allow negotiations to begin. Even if the German Government could not help us in this we would have to make our own contribution. It would greatly enhance the value of that contribution if I could make it clear that Germany approved of it.

¹ Cf. No. 163, note 4.

² No. 144.

3. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that while he would, if I pressed him, put this matter before his Government, his own personal conviction was that there was no chance whatever of their agreeing to do what I asked. In the view of the German Government the position on the Franco-German frontier was already very one-sided. Germany had a few troops in a still unfortified zone, while France had a force of some 200,000 men. In those circumstances what earthly purpose could the Staff conversations serve? I replied that it was not a question of the military value of such conversations at all. What we were endeavouring to do, as I had very many times explained to Herr von Ribbentrop, was to find some means of reassuring opinion in France and Belgium, which was profoundly disturbed at the action of the German Government.

4. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that for his part he thought that much the best way to do this would be to make it plain to the French Government that we did want new mutual assistance pacts, to tell them how far we were prepared to go in taking new commitments upon ourselves in connexion with these pacts, and thus open negotiations. He was confident that his Government could not agree to the proposal that I had made, and he much hoped that I would make no reference to Staff conversations in my speech tomorrow, since that must have a bad effect in Germany.

5. I replied that the position of His Majesty's Government was very difficult indeed. The German Government had made no positive contribution to help us in our immediate difficulties, and I was sorry to learn that this proposal was of no avail. I had one other suggestion to make. Would it be possible for the German Government to declare, while reserving in whatever language it thought fit all the rights of sovereignty that it claimed, that it did not intend to proceed with the fortification of the zone for a limited period [?]. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that he thought he had already given me the answer to this proposal yesterday. I said did that mean that the answer was No? Herr von Ribbentrop said that he was afraid that that was the position. It would not be possible for the German Government to make any such contribution as was suggested. Herr von Ribbentrop then once again expatiated on his belief that French opinion needed time to come round, and that it must be given time, and then their attitude to the proposals would change as their attitude to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement had done. I replied that I did not think that the position was as simple as that, and that unless some contribution could be found which would give some indication that international law would be respected in future, then I was afraid that the chances of these negotiations being begun were far from bright.³

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

³ In his account of this conversation (*D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 211), Herr von Ribbentrop stated that the conversation took place on Mr. Eden's invitation at the House of Commons at 3 p.m.

Mr. Eden to Viscount Chilston (Moscow)

No. 178 [C 2395/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 25, 1936*

My Lord,

M. Litvinov asked to see me this afternoon when he spoke of his anxiety about the present international situation. He wished to know whether His Majesty's Government were still anxious to refer the Franco-Soviet Pact to the Hague Court. In his view this was unnecessary. I replied that this was a matter which we did not consider affected us directly, but for my part I saw no particular advantage in pressing the matter further.

2. M. Litvinov stated that there were certain aspects of German policy which seemed to be insufficiently appreciated in this country. Last year when Germany openly rearmed she declared that she had then re-established her complete equality. Now, however, she was saying the same thing again about the demilitarised zone. M. Litvinov fully anticipated that in due course Germany would be repeating those comments about Danzig, Memel, the colonies and maybe the Corridor and other issues as well. This process of alleged inequality could last almost for ever. When was a halt going to be called? He much hoped that it would be in my power to say something tomorrow to give France some measure of comfort, for otherwise Germany would derive nothing but benefit from her act.

3. Finally M. Litvinov asked what was the attitude of His Majesty's Government to Eastern Europe. His Government had been a little perturbed to find no reference to Eastern Europe in the White Paper.¹ I replied that if there was no reference to Eastern Europe in the White Paper it was because its main purpose was to deal with the situation created by the denunciation of the Locarno Treaties, but that what His Majesty's Government desired was a peaceful settlement for the whole of Europe. If it would assist M. Litvinov I was fully prepared to make this clear in my speech in the Debate tomorrow.² M. Litvinov replied that it would help him, but he would not have asked for some such statement except that the oft-repeated hostile references by the German Chancellor to his country made it of importance that it should be clear that His Majesty's Government held the view which I had expressed to him as to the desirability of a European settlement.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

¹ No. 144.

² Cf. No. 163, note 4.

CHAPTER III

Reactions of the Locarno Powers to German memorandum of March 31: progress of Italian arms in Ethiopia

March 26–April 21, 1936

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN the German memorandum delivered by Herr von Ribbentrop to Mr. Eden on March 24 (see No. 163, note 2) the virtual rejection of the proposals of the Locarno powers was accompanied by the promise of a full statement on March 31 of the German Government's views. This statement took the form of a long and argumentative note (in thirty-two numbered paragraphs) to the British Government; it was duly dated March 31 and presented to Mr. Eden by Herr von Ribbentrop on April 1 (No. 193 below). Owing to its length and the fact that it has frequently been printed elsewhere (see *ibid.*, note 2) it is not reproduced in this volume, but the main points may be conveniently summarized as follows.

After regretting that the proposals of March 19 did not provide 'a serviceable and fruitful basis for the initiation and carrying out of such a genuine work of peace' as the German Government desired, the document characterized the Locarno Treaty as essentially a dictated settlement, and the proposals of March 19 as containing 'elements of discrimination against a great nation'. Accordingly, 'the German Government must decline all ~~proposals in the draft [of March 19]~~ which impose one-sided burdens on Germany and therefore discriminate against her' (paragraph 16). But Germany had 'no intention of ever attacking France or Belgium' (paragraph 17), and therefore 'the desire of the French Government for immediate General Staff discussions is incomprehensible to the German Government' (paragraph 18). Then, after expatiating on the desire to work for a lasting and secure form of peace for Europe, the document set out in paragraph 22, under nineteen sub-headings, the German Government's peace plan.

This included proposals for a first period of four months 'during which the atmosphere is gradually calming', up to the signature of non-aggression pacts (point 2); an assurance that Germany would not reinforce her troops in the Rhineland during this period (3) or move her troops closer to the Belgian and French frontiers (4); an undertaking, on the basis of strict reciprocity, to agree to any military limitation of the German Western frontier (9); conclusion of a twenty-five year non-aggression security pact

between France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other (10); Great Britain and Italy once more to sign the security pact (11) and to render military assistance in accordance with these undertakings (12); provisions for the reciprocal avoidance of propaganda and the poisoning of the education of youth (15); plebiscites in Germany and France 'to give this agreement the character of a sacred pledge' (16); a German undertaking to re-enter the League of Nations with the expectation of a clearing-up in a reasonable time of the question of colonial equality and other matters (18); the setting-up of an international court of arbitration (19). There were also proposals for the regulation of armaments, humanization of war, and the exchange of views on economic problems. 'May this attempt to achieve European understanding at last succeed.'

The French Government replied in a twenty-page document in two parts ('Memorandum' and 'Déclaration') presented to Sir G. Clerk on April 8 (see No. 217 below). This document is published in *D.D.F.* (Series 2, vol. ii, No. 37), and it received wide publicity at the time in the European press.

it was not
The Memorandum, in ten numbered paragraphs, sought to controvert, point by point, the arguments of the German memorandum of March 31. It asserted that in spite of the German repudiation on March 7 of obligations freely and solemnly undertaken, the Government of the French Republic had sought an amicable solution. This had been rejected, and in the references to the peace conference and Locarno agreement, 'having thus made light of the essential principles of international law the German Government, in their memorandum, paid no more attention to history'. The specific proposals of the Locarno powers—reference to the Hague Court, occupation of a zone by an international force, assurances concerning the German para-military forces in the Rhineland—had been refused or ignored. As for the German peace plan, this contribution was considered to be 'more apparent than real'. What guarantee was there that the new system of security, to replace that 'which Germany thought fit to destroy on the 7th March' would be preserved? Would the Western Air Pact include an agreement on Aerial Limitation? Why if the Reich Government regarded the Franco-Soviet pact as a threat to its security did it not conclude a non-aggression pact with the U.S.S.R.? If Germany returned to the League of Nations it would do so 'in equivocal circumstances'. The reference to colonial claims suggested that it was reserving its right to withdraw again. The proposals for limitation of armaments showed the intention of the Reich to proceed 'only with the greatest circumspection'. The memorandum ended with a general question: did Germany recognize as valid, without reservations, the existing territorial and political settlement in Europe?

The Declaration started by affirming France's belief in peace, and in the possibility of guaranteeing it by means of a 'small number of precise and systematic rules'. There followed a set of principles, based on equality of rights, and then specific proposals for the organization of political security and for economic peace (the rational organization of monetary exchanges, expansion of markets, a European customs truce, and a common reservoir

of raw materials). Under the first head it was suggested that even if experience seemed to show that Europe was too vast a field for the application of collective security, mutual assistance, and disarmament, regional agreements should be organized within the framework of Europe, and this task should be entrusted to a European Commission constituted within the framework of the League of Nations. A final paragraph affirmed that proposals must conform to the Covenant of the League of Nations.

No. 170

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 45 Telegraphic [C 2352/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 26, 1936, 11.50 a.m.*

My telegram No. 40.¹

Belgian Ambassador called yesterday on instructions from his Government and made communication in following sense. The German reply created a difficult situation since it rejected the proposals of 19th March² and made counter proposals. Monsieur Flandin had announced publicly his refusal to discuss the latter. As a result the only method of renewing contact in the view of Belgian Government was to proceed on basis of paragraph 1(a) of letter to be addressed by His Majesty's Government to Belgium and France which envisaged contingency of failure of attempt at conciliation of 19th March.³ This contingency resulted from refusal of German Government seriousness of which was aggravated by news that Germany was reinforcing troops in Demilitarised Zone. Sir R. Vansittart interpolated that this news was unknown here.

Belgian Ambassador continued that the letter provided that in case of a situation such as the present His Majesty's Government should, in consultation with the Belgian and French Governments, examine the measures necessary to meet it. Belgian Government thought that on this basis French Government would join the conversation, and suggested that next meeting should be held in Paris. This would strengthen position of French Government with its public. Concessions necessary to progress of conversation should come from French; and it was not necessary that this country should add to its obligations. Belgian Government proposed 31st March as date for meeting. German answer would not then have been made, but the four Powers would be able to discuss it before separating. His Majesty's Government should continue to exchange views with Germany in the name of the three other countries. Sir R. Vansittart told Belgian Ambassador that we considered such an early meeting undesirable. We had agreed that we mu[st] all have time to consider German reply before fresh arrangements were made; and demand for immediate consultation was in any case based on

¹ See No. 164, a despatch amplifying this telegram.

² No. 144; cf. No. 163, note 2.

³ See No. 144.

a misinterpretation of our letter. Ambassador promised to inform Belgian Prime Minister of our reaction to proposal. These ideas were in the nature of suggestions only and Belgian Government were awaiting views of Monsieur Flandin.

Repeated to Paris No. 97, Rome No. 106, Berlin No. 84, and Moscow No. 51.

No. 171

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 27)

No. 62 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2370/4/18]

BERLIN, March 26, 1936

I hear that the drafting of counter proposals is taxing the wits of the Chancellor and his advisers at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The proposals must not infringe the principle of *Gleichberechtigung* while appealing to the public in neutral countries and above all in Great Britain.

The Chancellor realises that his most important asset is the good will of the British public. His efforts to speak to foreign peoples over the heads of their respective governments have proved unexpectedly successful and he may be expected to continue to exploit this advantage in the future.

By delaying his proposals until the 31st he hopes to reap several advantages. He will impress foreign opinion by the unanimity of the German people at the polls on March 29th. He will obtain a mandate from his people in Germany to make bold proposals. Finally he will gain time in the Rhineland question, a most important factor. Possession, he knows, is nine points of the law.

No. 172

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 31)

No. 376 [J 2709/1000/1]

ROME, March 26, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I had a long conversation yesterday evening with the Marquis Theodoli¹ whom I had met casually at the Palazzo Chigi the day before. It is some time since I had a long discussion with him and our conversation ranged over a wide area. What particularly impressed me was the persistence with which my interlocutor kept harping on the theme 'What do the English want? Why do they keep such an enormous fleet in the Mediterranean and so many aeroplanes in Egypt

¹ President of the League of Nations Mandates Commission.

unless for the purpose of intimidating Italy to yield to English demands? Was it Sicily, or what was it we wanted? If only we would define our wishes, discussions could begin'. These questions, he said, were also troubling his chief, Signor Mussolini. Indeed the latter had recently said to him that he wished he could have the Prime Minister and yourself in his room in the Palazzo Venezia, for he might then be able to discover what were England's real motives and aims.

2. It seems almost incredible that at this stage of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute the Italians should still harbour the same suspicions regarding our motives which have been the subject of discussion for the past twelve months. In Rome, London and Geneva, Italian statesmen have been informed *ad nauseam* of the true motives of British policy and these explanations have been backed up by public statements by Ministers in the House of Commons and elsewhere. It seems indeed impossible to convince them of the truth, possibly since they are constitutionally incapable of believing that any other State can act other than they would themselves in like circumstances. It was with a heavy heart, therefore, that I assured the Marquis Theodoli once again that we had no ulterior aims. He knew what our interests were with regard to any ultimate settlement in Abyssinia, namely the question of Lake Tsana and rights of grazing for British frontier tribes. The Marquis answered that this could not possibly account for our action. There must be something more and something outside Abyssinia. After explaining to him afresh our position about the League of Nations, I told him that I could give him a definite assurance that we had no further aims. What we wanted in the Mediterranean region was that we could be certain that Italy would not attack us; we certainly should not attack Italy. Further, that we would both mutually respect each other's interests in the Mediterranean and in the adjoining regions. The Marquis replied that if this was all surely everything could be settled in a quarter of an hour; but the riddle of our fleet still remained unanswered. I said that we equally had to take precautions so that we should not find ourselves in a weak position if Italy considered the possibility of attacking us. He remarked that this was quite out of the question. Surely Italy had enough with one war on her shoulders: to undertake a second one would be folly. I observed that this might all be true but I felt bound to call his attention to Signor Mussolini's last speech when he signalled [*sic*] out my country as in essence 'Public Enemy No. 1' (see paragraph 2 of my telegram No. 168).² Such an attitude could hardly lead us to lessen our precautions.

3. The Marquis Theodoli then passed to general European questions. He said that Italy and England, as the two guarantor Powers of the Locarno Treaty, ought now to take the lead in securing some European settlement and reconstruction. At present everything seemed likely to fall to pieces. England and Italy together could exercise great influence on Herr Hitler

² This telegram of March 24, not printed, summarized Signor Mussolini's speech to the Second National Assembly of Corporations on March 23 (see *The Times*, March 24, 1936, p. 16) in which he reviewed Italy's economic situation.

and could get him to be more reasonable than he would otherwise be. He trusted that we were not making the mistake of believing that European reconstruction could be effected by France, Great Britain and Germany alone to the exclusion of Italy. He had indications from London that we were inclined to put Italy on one side. I said that I had no news to this effect and I knew that Signor Grandi had participated in all the discussions of the Locarno Powers in London.

4. My visitor then [then] remarked that even when the Abyssinian question was settled there would still unhappily remain a bitter feeling against Great Britain in Italian minds. Would not some gesture be desirable in order to remove this feeling? I replied that I did not really see why we should be expected to make any gesture. Why should not Italy make one if such were necessary? This, however, was a matter for the future.³

I have, etc.,

ERIC DRUMMOND

³ Minutes on this despatch by Mr. G. H. Thompson, a First Secretary in the Abyssinian Department, Mr. Peterson, Sir L. Oliphant, and Lord Cranborne were generally to the effect that Signor Mussolini had failed to listen to, or to understand, British explanations as to their attitude and motives. Mr. O'Malley (April 2) suggested that the reason for the Italian 'puzzledom' about the British fleet might be that 'Mussolini never in his maddest moments contemplated what we generally call "a mad dog act", and that he has all along been quite unable to believe that we seriously entertained any fears on this head'. Lord Stanhope thought that as a result of the British defensive measures 'Italy suddenly saw herself faced with overwhelming force. It caused her to change from threats to querulous [sic] questionings & these persist, but they might not have persisted if we had been a little less thorough. S. 6/4/36.' Lord Cranborne remarked that the 'Italians seem incapable of understanding that we think they have behaved monstrously in Abyssinia' (April 7).

No. 173

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 180 Telegraphic [J 2601/84/1]

ROME, March 27, 1936, 12.15 a.m.

My Japanese colleague,¹ who as you know is in close touch with certain Italian circles here, speaking to me yesterday² of M. de Madariaga's new appointment,³ expressed his fears that Italians would not place all their cards in front of him. The Czechoslovak Minister⁴ tells me too that M. de Madariaga is regarded in some quarters here as a satellite of London due to his published works and the fact that his wife is English; but I do not believe that this view is shared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My Japanese

¹ Dr. Y. Sugimura.

² This telegram was drafted on March 26.

³ A reference to the resolution adopted by the Committee of Thirteen on March 23; see No. 158.

⁴ Dr. F. Chvalkovsky.

colleague understood that Signor Mussolini was willing to communicate his peace terms to the French Government but only on condition that French would assure him in advance of their general support for those terms. This seemed to me, I said, an impossible position: how could the French promise to support terms of which they were ignorant?

On the other hand Marquis Theodile [*sic*] seemed satisfied yesterday⁵ with the decision of the Committee of 13 but expressed the hope that M. de Madariaga, who he understood was now coming to Rome alone, would make suggestions of his own rather than await proposals from Italian side. In any event, he said, the Italian authorities would be very frank and open with him.

Incidentally I learned from the Marquis that Signor Mussolini was much annoyed at M. Flandin's statement that cessation of hostilities and the raising of sanctions must occur simultaneously while my Japanese colleague told me that Signor Mussolini had been equally annoyed at German offer to return to Geneva⁶ just at the moment when Italy was threatening to leave the League if further sanctions were imposed. (This is confirmed by German Embassy here). My Japanese colleague's informant had stated that he believed recently concluded additional protocols between Italy, Austria and Hungary were in some measure a reply or reaction to the German offer.⁷

⁵ Presumably a reference to Sir E. Drummond's conversation with Marquis Theodoli reported in No. 172.

⁶ Cf. Enclosure in No. 42.

⁷ Three additional protocols supplementing the Protocols of Rome of March 1934 were signed in Rome by Signor Mussolini, General Gömbös, Prime Minister of Hungary, and Herr von Schuschnigg, Chancellor of Austria, on March 23, after conversations beginning on the afternoon of March 21. By the three protocols they agreed (1) to continue to harmonize their action to an even greater extent than in the past; (2) to confirm anew the decision not to undertake an important political negotiation concerning the Danubian question with the government of a third state without establishing contacts with the other two signatory powers; (3) that the permanent organ of reciprocal consultation between them should be constituted by the foreign ministers of the three signatory countries. There was also a brief reference to economic collaboration with other Danubian states. The protocols are printed in *B.F.S.P.*, vol. 140, p. 333.

No. 174

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 88 Telegraphic [C 2428/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 27, 1936, 7.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 78.¹

Lord Cranborne and I received this morning Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr Dieckhoff.

Herr von Ribbentrop said that there were certain points in my speech in the House of Commons yesterday afternoon² which he was going to ask

¹ See No. 163, which amplifies this telegram.

² See *ibid.*, note 4.

me to explain. He wished first, however, to refer to the important step constituted by the reference in my speech yesterday to the Staff conversations with the French. He had already told me what a bad effect would be produced by a decision to hold these conversations; and he regretted my reference to the matter yesterday. It would be quite impossible for people in Germany to understand the necessity for a step of this kind. Chancellor had only sent 19 battalions into the Rhineland; and there were as yet no fortifications there. France was allied with three-quarters of Europe. There was no threat to France from Germany.

I said that we had definitely agreed to conversations. We were prepared to carry out proposal III in the White Paper.³

Herr von Ribbentrop said that the beginning of the Staff conversations and the despatch of the letter proposed at the end of the White Paper would stop any movement for the consolidation of the position in Europe. It would strengthen those forces in France which were opposed to the stabilisation of the position.

Herr von Ribbentrop added that everything which he had said was under reserve of the approval of the German Government; and as to any further steps, he must make every reserve after my speech of yesterday.

I said that I would like Herr von Ribbentrop to understand our position. The preoccupation of His Majesty's Government had been and was to get negotiations going; to reach a point where the proposals of the German Chancellor and other proposals could be discussed round a table. But I could not conceal from him the difficulty, almost the impossibility, of beginning a conversation of this kind in the present situation. In our view the German action of March 7th had given a severe shock to confidence in Europe. Germany had acted by force and not with argument. He must not be surprised if fear had been created. His Majesty's Government had since done their best to restore confidence and to create the conditions in which negotiation would become possible. The German Government had been asked to do three things. They had been unable to accept any of them. His Majesty's Government had also considered what they could do to meet the temporary situation pending negotiations; and they had decided to confirm the Locarno Treaty and to establish contacts between the General Staffs. But neither of these things would operate save in the event of an attack by Germany on France or Belgium; and His Majesty's Government certainly did not expect such an attack; nor did they value the contact of the General Staffs as a military factor.

They had consented to that contact in the hope that it would give France and Belgium the confidence to enter the negotiations. Herr von Ribbentrop must realize that when the German Government had stated that the Treaty of Locarno was at an end so far as Germany was concerned, France and Belgium had looked to see if His Majesty's Government would adopt a similar attitude. In such circumstances His Majesty's Government had to make it clear that their obligation stood and in order to restore confidence

³ See No. 144.

they had to make arrangements to show that their obligation could and would be put into effect if the need arose.

I could not admit that our action in this matter had made negotiation more difficult.

The conversations would imply no political obligation and could not extend our political obligation. The Staffs could only discuss action to be taken in circumstances covered by the political obligation. At this stage reference was made to the statement in the letter to the Belgian Government from the French Ambassador at Brussels dated March 6th that the Franco-Belgian military conversations created no political obligation.⁴

Herr von Ribbentrop said that he thought it very important that the conversations should not be begun so long as we had negotiations in view. If we wanted constructive negotiations we ought to think over the position very carefully before promising France Staff talks. That was very important.

I told Herr [von] Ribbentrop that he must have confidence in His Majesty's Government to do what they could to secure the opening of negotiations. It would be for His Majesty's Government who had as yet been helped by no corresponding contribution from the German Government to make it clear to the French that the Staff talks were being given to replace the security which France had lost through the remilitarization of the Rhineland; but that His Majesty's Government remained as eager as ever to open the general negotiations. His Majesty's Government wanted a wide settlement in Europe. They were obliged to do something to give the French and Belgians confidence to negotiate, but they would certainly not allow France unreasonably to hold up the negotiations. I again begged Herr von Ribbentrop to remember that the German action of March 7th had created the present situation: and I reminded him of the position at the Paris conversations and of our obligations under the Locarno Treaty. In the light of these facts I should have thought that the German Government were far from having any reason to complain if a result of their action was Anglo-French Staff conversations against unprovoked aggression in accordance with Locarno Treaty.

Herr von Ribbentrop left for Berlin this afternoon.

Repeated to Paris No. 100, Brussels No. 47, Rome No. 112, Moscow No. 53, Hague No. 16, Prague No. 42, Belgrade No. 42, Bucharest No. 45, Angora No. 65, Washington No. 104.

⁴ Cf. Baron P. van Zuylen, *Les Mains Libres* (Brussels, 1950), pp. 331-41; *D.D.F.*, vol. i, No. 284.

No. 175

Record by Mr. Sargent of a conversation with Herr Dieckhoff
[C 2570/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 27, 1936*

Herr Dieckhoff came to say good-bye to me today, and said that his task in the Wilhelmstrasse was going to be made much more difficult by the fact that we had agreed to Staff conversations with the French. I said I was surprised to hear this, since the Führer himself had at one time suggested that, if it would give confidence to France, he would see no objection to an Anglo-French defensive alliance. Herr Dieckhoff did not deny this, but said that it had been a 'second best' suggestion. To this I replied that unfortunately we were at the present moment living in the realm of the second best, largely owing to the fact that the German Government had themselves chosen the second best method of getting rid of the Demilitarized Zone. Maybe military conversations were second best measures, but they were at the present time necessary as a contribution towards the restoration of French and Belgian confidence, which had been shattered by Germany's withdrawal from Locarno; they were all the more necessary seeing that the German Government on their side had been unable to make any contribution to this end.

Herr Dieckhoff replied that he felt we should not allow ourselves to be detained by these petty difficulties but should concentrate on the big problem of building up a general settlement, which everybody was demanding and which could now at length be achieved. I said that primarily depended on the foundations on which it was proposed to build.

We then turned to other subjects.¹

O. G. SARGENT

¹ Sir R. Vansittart remarked: 'Mr. Sargent spoke well. The Germans are trying to exploit their advantage too much; and Mr. Sargent did well to give them no encouragement. R. V. March 28.'

No. 176

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 28, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 186 Telegraphic [C 2470/4/18]

Important

ROME, *March 28, 1936, 12.10 a.m.*

French Ambassador acting upon instructions saw Signor Mussolini yesterday with the object of enquiring why the Italian Government were withholding their approval of arrangements recently agreed to in London by Locarno Powers. The head of government observed that the only two documents which mattered were letters of guarantee from Italy and Great Britain and that it was from the Italian letter that he was withholding his

signature. The reasons he gave were those to be expected namely that so long as Italy was the victim of sanctions she was unable to 'play'. My French colleague derived two impressions from this portion of his conversation. (A) that if he the French Ambassador had insisted he could probably have persuaded Signor Mussolini to agree to sign. (B) that Signor Mussolini was under the impression that London was not particularly anxious for him to do so. French Ambassador was at pains to explain that in no sense did Signor Mussolini seem to be indulging in blackmail during the discussion; he appeared to be arguing his case quite calmly and objectively.

2. Conversation between the French Ambassador and Signor Mussolini then ranged over a much wider field. Signor Mussolini told my French colleague that from his early contacts with Herr Hitler he felt pretty certain that the latter's main objective was to build a counter fortification to Maginot line of such strength as to be impregnable and to produce as it were a stalemate as between France and Germany and an encirclement of France from the east leaving Germany free for activities eastwards in Europe. To this view Count Chambrun attached capital importance. Another factor which emerged from the conversation was complete absence of anti-British feeling evinced by Signor Mussolini. The latter had argued that it was only fools who imagined that the British Empire was tottering to its fall. He did not believe this for one moment and in two or three years' time Great Britain by re-armament would be in a position of paramount strength. It was clear to his, Signor Mussolini's, mind that British policy during the intervening period would seek to avoid every kind of adventure or commitment which would retard the process. It was therefore still his policy to reconstruct Stresa front but so long as Great Britain's policy of sanctions against Italy continued that would be impossible. Everything that had happened in the last few months showed how essential Italy was to stability of Europe. Weakening of Italy and policy of sanctions against her were the cause of weakening of Locarno. It was inconceivable that had Stresa front been intact Germany would have risked the action she had recently taken in the Rhineland.

3. As to Abyssinia continuance of sanctions simply meant that Italy would have to shed more blood and fight another battle. Signor Mussolini averred that this went against the grain but so long as sanctions continued the Emperor would feel that there was still something to be gained by continuation of his resistance. Signor Mussolini was in no sense desirous of dictating terms to the Emperor and would be reasonable but the Emperor would not be reasonable so long as he was persuaded by his advisers that salvation lay in Geneva and in sanctions.¹

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

¹ Cf. *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 526.

No. 177

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 28, 3 p.m.)
No. 133 Telegraphic [C 2497/97/18]

Secret

BERLIN, March 28, 1936, 2.48 p.m.

Your telegram 83.¹

Following for Mr. Sargent.

I share your views but cannot agree that they are pessimistic.

Germany is a furiously 'expanding universe' and I cannot see any present limit to real implications of 'Gleichberechtigung'. Return of her former colonial empire will only be a first step towards this goal. Even before the war that empire was considered inadequate. Herr Hitler, as Germany grows stronger, will certainly point at small countries such as Portugal and Belgium with large and rich colonies. He may possibly omit Dutch possessions so as not to fall foul of Japan.

This is not all, however, for Germany considers His Majesty's Government have given an undertaking that she amongst other countries shall receive a full share of raw materials at an early date. Sir S. Hoare's speech at Geneva² made a deep impression here and although it did not contain any specific promise it is held by Nazi party to have constituted an undertaking in the above sense just as the Treaty of Versailles promised disarmament of the victors.

So long as Germany is anxious for an understanding with Great Britain she will hold her hand but once that understanding proves unattainable she will agitate for full 'Gleichberechtigung' in colonial and raw material spheres. I fear the true meaning of that blessed word is not yet understood abroad.

¹ In this telegram of March 25, Mr. Sargent referred to the deliberations of the Plymouth Committee (see No. 50). The Foreign Office representative on this committee had said, in reply to a question, that it was difficult to believe that Germany would be permanently content with the return of only one or two of her African colonies. The committee was likely to regard these views as unduly pessimistic, and he asked for Sir E. Phipps's opinion.

² See Volume XIV, Appendix IV.

No. 178

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)
No. 102 Telegraphic [C 2463/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 28, 1936, 7 p.m.

The French Ambassador called yesterday afternoon and expressed satisfaction at the previous day's Debate.¹ He felt that that part of my speech which gave a historical survey of the demilitarized zone had been especially

¹ See No. 163, note 4.

valuable and that the British public was now in a better position to judge the issue than it had been hitherto. I replied that I shared the Ambassador's belief that the Debate as a whole had been useful; but we must not be too confident in estimating the reactions of British public opinion. I had tried yesterday to tell the history of our troubles fairly as I saw it and I had some confidence that the British public as a whole would follow any lead given them by Members of Parliament. But the British public desired above all things a settlement just as His Majesty's Government did and public opinion might be expected accordingly to express itself forcibly or to modify its position quite sharply at any time during the next few months.

The Ambassador fully appreciated this. He asked what was to happen on receipt of the German reply? He was not hopeful that it would contain any contribution to meet our immediate difficulties or any very new contribution to a European settlement. On this assumption M. Flandin had unofficially consulted him as to what should happen. He thought that it was in M. Flandin's mind that there should be an early meeting between the other Locarno Powers after Herr Hitler's reply. Such a meeting would be necessary in order to make plain that the reply did not meet the conditions laid down in the White Paper² and to show that we had therefore reached the state of affairs provided for in the letter.

I replied that I did not care about the idea of a meeting. What were the four Powers to meet about? If it was merely to declare that the German answer was unsatisfactory—if it were unsatisfactory—they could quite well do that at home. I thought that the effect of another meeting of the Locarno Powers at this time, more particularly if that meeting were to do nothing more than complain that the German reply was unsatisfactory, would have a bad effect on British public opinion. I very much hoped the French Government would be careful not to seek to attempt to extract too much from a more favourable British atmosphere. In my own view further meetings could hardly be helpful now. It would be wiser to allow a breathing space over the French elections. This would moreover allow some of us to get a much needed rest before undertaking the arduous labours that clearly lay ahead. The Ambassador feared that if we waited to discuss the German reply till after the French elections it would be too late as that would mean an adjournment until June, while the new French Cabinet was formed. On the other hand he thought that after a meeting about the 6th or 7th of April it might then have been agreeable to all to adjourn for a considerable period.

I maintained my dislike of the idea of a further four Power meeting. After all, the French Government had now obtained from us the essentials for which they had hoped to compensate them for the loss of security created by the occupation of the zone. We had emphasised in the Debate that paragraph 3 of the White Paper stood; and I hoped after meeting my colleagues on Monday³ to be able to give him some indication of our attitude in respect of a date for Staff conversations, and in respect of the letter. In these

² No. 144.

³ March 30: see No. 184 below.

circumstances surely it would be better to leave well alone. The Ambassador replied that I would appreciate that there were difficulties also on the French side. The Staff conversations and the letter were very satisfactory from the point of view of any possible future German attack on France or Belgium. The former, however, had now been so much reduced in scope that they could scarcely be paraded by the French Government as a very effective reassurance for French public opinion. The Ambassador added that he wished to make it clear that for his part he was not complaining at all of my interpretation of the Staff conversations. He thought this quite correct from the context of the terms of the agreement itself. It was also necessary to bear in mind that neither the Staff conversations nor the letter did anything to meet the situation in respect of the Rhineland itself. To accept these advantages and to do nothing about the Rhineland would be equivalent to passing a sponge over the whole incident. He hardly thought this attitude possible for any French Government. I replied that if, as I believed, there was no action we could take at this four Power meeting, it seemed to me all the less advantageous to meet and take note of the fact. The Ambassador replied that he would communicate further with his Government on the matter and would tell them of my views.

Repeated to Berlin No. 90, Brussels No. 49, Rome No. 114, Moscow No. 55.

No. 179

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 29, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 187 Telegraphic [J 2637/84/1]

ROME, March 28, 1936, 11.10 p.m.

Yesterday official spokesman of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda said that two conditions were necessary for settlement that would be satisfactory to Italy.

1. Lifting of sanctions and 2. Reversal of League condemnation of Italy as the aggressor. He enlarged at some length on the second point claiming that lifting of material sanctions was not enough and that it was essential to cancel moral reprobation which had been fixed by hasty verdict of Geneva.

I learn from a journalistic source that in recent conversations with several diplomats Signor Suvich mentioned the same two conditions and added a third: that the League should undertake not to influence the Emperor against accepting Italy's peace terms.

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden regarding Part III of the Proposals of the 19th March²

[C 2528/4/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 28, 1936

In order to bring Part III of the Proposals into force the appropriate course seems to be to convert it into a declaration signed by Great Britain, France and Belgium. I think this ought to be done at once, so as to mark the fact that we consider ourselves to be still in the interim period for which Part III is definitely intended.

Annexed (Annex I) is the draft of such a declaration to be signed by the representatives of the United Kingdom, Belgium and France. The fact that Part III has been removed from its context, and that Italy is presumably not prepared to sign, has necessitated some minor amendments of wording, but it seems also desirable to make plain the point, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer explained in reply to Sir Austen Chamberlain in the House on the 26th March, that the three Powers regard themselves as bound among themselves, but not (in view of the German repudiation of the Treaty) bound to Germany.³

There is also annexed (Annex II) a draft of exchange of notes between (1) His Majesty's Government and the Belgian Government, (2) His Majesty's Government and the French Government, to cover the point mentioned in my speech of the 26th March,⁴ to the effect that the Staff contacts were not to give rise to any fresh political commitments. The wording of this stipulation is taken from the exchange of notes between the French and Belgian Governments of the 6th March, which I mentioned in my speech.

The texts of these documents will, of course, have to be settled with the French and Belgian Governments, but the drafts have been prepared in order to show the lines on which it is proposed to proceed.

The 'Letter' attached to the Proposals of March 19. Now that the debate in the House of Commons has taken place I do not think the despatch of this 'Letter' ought to be further delayed. But if it is sent in present circumstances to the French and Belgian Governments it will require a certain amount of modification, since the opening sentence no longer corresponds with the facts. The Proposals of the 19th March have not yet been converted into an 'arrangement,' nor can it be said that any 'decision' has yet been taken by the Powers concerned. Moreover, mention of the Italian Government must now needs be omitted. Also, if we recognise the existence now of an 'arrangement' in the place of the 'Proposals' of the 19th March, it might strengthen the French argument that the German rejection of this 'arrangement' had

¹ This memorandum was printed for the Cabinet and discussed at a meeting of ministers on March 30: see No. 184 below.

² No. 144.

³ See 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1543-6.

⁴ See No. 163, note 4.

brought to an end the 'effort of conciliation' referred to in the 'letter,' and thereby brought into operation the undertakings we give in the 'letter.'

It is clearly desirable to modify the text of the 'letter' as little as possible, and the best way of doing this would seem to be to replace the first part of the first sentence of the 'letter' by a simple reference to the Proposals of the 19th March, and subsequently to substitute the word 'Proposals' for the word 'arrangement' where the latter appears in the first sentence and again in 1(d). A draft on these lines is attached (Annex III).

This alteration will, of course, have to be discussed and agreed upon with the French and Belgian Governments, and it is quite possible that they may make difficulties, but I do not see how in the circumstances this can be avoided.

ANNEX I TO No. 180

Draft Declaration by Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom

The undersigned representatives of the Governments of Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom, duly authorised in that behalf,

Declare that nothing that has happened before or since the unilateral action taken by the German Government in violation of the Treaty of Locarno can be considered as having freed the above-mentioned Governments from any of their mutual obligations or guarantees under the said treaty, and that these subsist in their entirety,

Undertake forthwith to instruct their General Staffs to enter into contact with a view to arranging the technical conditions in which the obligations which are binding upon them should be carried out in case of unprovoked aggression.

Done at London, the day of .

ANNEX II TO No. 180

Draft Exchange of Notes with the French and Belgian Governments

By the declaration signed this day, our respective Governments have undertaken to instruct their General Staffs to enter into contact with a view to arranging the technical conditions in which the obligations which are binding upon them should be carried out in case of unprovoked aggression. On behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, I have the honour to state that it is understood that this contact between the General Staffs cannot give rise, in respect of either Government, to any political undertaking nor to any obligation regarding the organisation of national defence.

The present note and your Excellency's reply in similar terms will be regarded as placing on record the understanding arrived at between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of the French Republic/Belgian Government on this subject.

(Similar notes from the French and Belgian Governments to His Majesty's Government.)

ANNEX III TO No. 180

Draft Letter, to be Addressed by the Representatives of the United Kingdom to the Representatives of Belgium and France

With reference to the 'Text of Proposals drawn up by the Representatives of Belgium, France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Italy,' dated the 19th March, 1936, I am authorised to give you the official assurance that, if the efforts of conciliation attempted in the said Proposals should fail, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom

1. (a) Will at once consider, in consultation with your Government and the French/Belgian Government, the steps to be taken to meet the new situation thus created;

(b) Will immediately come to the assistance of your Government, in accordance with the Treaty of Locarno, in respect of any measures which shall be jointly decided upon;

(c) Will, in return for reciprocal assurances from your Government, take, in consultation with your Government, all practical measures available to His Majesty's Government for the purpose of ensuring the security of your country against unprovoked aggression;

(d) Will, for this purpose, establish or continue the contact between the General Staffs of our two countries contemplated in paragraph III(2) of the said Proposals;

2. And furthermore, will subsequently endeavour at the Council of the League of Nations to secure the formulation by the latter of all useful recommendations for the maintenance of peace and the respect for international law.

No. 181

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received April 1)

No. 499 [C 2564/4/18]

PARIS, March 28, 1936

Sir,

Three weeks have now elapsed since German troops re-occupied the Rhineland zone, and Germany unilaterally tore up the Treaty of Locarno. Contrary to what might have been expected these acts of provocation were met by French public opinion both in the capital and in the provinces with calmness, not to say resignation—an attitude which has been maintained on the whole throughout the ensuing international crisis. There has at no time been any ebullition of popular feeling and no sign of panic, even the Bourse

itself revealing but little adverse tendency and that only in the earlier days of the crisis.

2. It has been suggested that this calmness should be ascribed to a misapprehension on the part of the public of the great gravity of the situation, or alternatively to the profoundly pacific character of the French people who are determined not to allow themselves to be stampeded into a war and who will not in any case contemplate fighting otherwise than on French soil in defence of their own homes. I should be inclined to favour the second of these hypotheses which is supported for example by words used by Colonel de la Rocque in a speech to his adherents at Rouen on March 20th as well as by other less tangible indications of the trend of opinion. I would add that the pacific tendency indicated was in the case under consideration reinforced by the widely held conviction that there was no immediate danger of the commission of any warlike act by Germany against the frontiers of France.

3. For its part the press also has shown itself comparatively calm and objective although it has of course followed developments with keen interest and even at times with anxiety. In my telegrams I have endeavoured to give a picture of the day to day fluctuations of newspaper opinion which, as will have been apparent to you, became at one time even more concerned with the question of the attitude to be adopted by Great Britain as a guarantor of the Locarno treaty than with the immediate or long-range intentions of Germany. As the London negotiations continued, the French press came to realise ever more clearly the difficulties which existed for His Majesty's Government as a result of the state of public opinion in Great Britain; and it may have been the realisation of this circumstance which caused them to refrain from anything which could fairly be described as polemics against His Majesty's Government. If this diagnosis is correct great credit is due to the London correspondents of the Paris newspapers. However that may be, the tone of the press throughout was in general one of sorrow rather than anger whenever His Majesty's Government found themselves for whatever reason unable to accept immediately and 'in toto' the French suggestions.

4. The news that the agreement of March 19th had been concluded was received here with relief; but a further period of depression followed (accompanied by a marked deterioration in the tone of the press). The thickening gloom was dissipated, however, by your speech (and by the course of the debate) in the House of Commons on March 26th¹ which enjoyed a practically unanimously favourable press.

5. Apart from criticism directed against His Majesty's Government on the ground that they were anxious to evade their Locarno obligations and to assume in the dispute the rôle of mediators between France and Germany rather than that of guarantors of French and Belgian security which was incumbent on them by reason of their signature of the Locarno Treaty, press opinion also occupied itself with a discussion of what should be done (1) as regards making Germany suffer for her violation of the Locarno Treaty and

¹ No. 163, note 4.

(2) as regards the offers made by Herr Hitler on March 7th. As time went on it became clear that the press were divided on both these matters but more and more voices were heard in favour of negotiations with Germany without the application of sanctions or even without any previous symbolical satisfaction as regards the violation of the Rhineland zone. A number of publicists, however, took the opportunity to insist that the present crisis had revealed clearly the folly of the imposition of sanctions on Italy and that these ought now to be suspended if not abolished.

6. If the press though moderate thus showed itself more concerned at the situation than public opinion, the attitude taken up by the Government revealed a greater rigidity than the trend of either would seem to justify. When the news of the German violation of the Rhineland zone was first received there were, I am informed, members of the Cabinet chief among whom was M. Mandel² who demanded not only the eventual adoption of economic and financial sanctions but also the taking of instant military reprisals against Germany. That suggestions of this kind were disregarded was due, I am informed, to the attitude taken up by the military authorities who would not agree to French armed intervention on German soil. In the event, as you are aware, the French Government decided to confine itself in the first place to manning the frontier fortifications and to appealing, together with the Belgian Government, to the League, and in the second place to attempting to persuade the other Locarno Powers to agree on a plan of action to be applied when the League Council should have met. I think there can be not much doubt that little support would have been found among the public for so extreme a policy as that advocated by M. Mandel. It may be worth mentioning in this connection that there have been rumours that influential Jews have been endeavouring to push the Government into a policy of more active opposition to Germany; these rumours seem to have led in their turn to talk (in *Croix de Feu* and similar circles) of the possibility of an anti-Semitic campaign.

7. In taking up and in maintaining the attitude adopted during the London negotiations the French Government have undoubtedly been showing themselves far more rigid than their own public opinion or even than the French press—compare for example the disapproval expressed in many quarters of M. Sarraut's broadcast address of March 8th.³ That they have felt themselves obliged to stiffness is, I think, partly due to electoral considerations. In view of the position taken up by the parties of the Left in the case of Abyssinia, M. Sarraut's Government cannot afford to lay themselves open to the charge of running away in the face of the German menace, of letting His Majesty's Government off what are regarded here as Great Britain's Locarno obligations and of abandoning their allies in the East of Europe.

8. I have little doubt that M. Laval, had he been in power at this time, would have shown more suppleness than M. Flandin, and, on the surface at least, would have been more conciliatory. This does not however prevent

² Minister for *Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphones*.

³ See *The Times*, March 9, 1936, p. 13.

him and his colleagues of the opposition from watching the French negotiators with cat-like intentness, ready to pounce on any sign of weakness, and to use it to discredit M. Sarraut's Government in the impending electoral campaign.

9. M. Flandin himself is in a particularly difficult position: there is no question but that he is extremely unpopular in France and that unpopularity is, I fear, due in no small measure to his alleged anglophile tendency. His enemies accuse him—with how little truth the course of the London conversations have shown—of being in the pocket of His Majesty's Government. For this reason, I think, he was sometimes obliged to show himself uncompromising and to refuse concessions, which a politician of M. Laval's particular reputation could have made with impunity.

10. There is reason to believe also that the Soviet Government have been applying pressure here to the same effect. If, however, as the result of the forthcoming elections, the present Government are returned to power, it should be possible to persuade them to adopt a rather more accommodating attitude than that which they have observed hitherto.⁴

I have, etc.,

GEORGE R. CLERK

⁴ Minutes show that Mr. Wigram (April 2) thought this 'a very excellent despatch' and Mr. Sargent thought paragraphs 9 and 10 'are worth noting'. Sir R. Vansittart wrote: 'Yes, we must remember §9 in trying moments, though I do not really think that M. Flandin's anglophil reputation is deserved. The interesting part of this despatch is its fresh reaffirmation of the margin between public and politician in France. And the French press has, on the whole, behaved quite remarkably well—considering the circumstances. R. V. April 4.' The despatch was seen by Mr. Eden.

No. 182

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received March 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 189 Telegraphic [J 2646/84/1]

ROME, March 30, 1936, 1 a.m.

My French colleague came to see me this morning¹ to give me results of his reflections on his interview on March 26th with Signor Mussolini (see my telegram No. 186).² He intends to telegraph them to Paris today. He repeated that Signor Mussolini expected shortly a big battle which would be decisive and which he felt sure to win. Nevertheless he was ready and anxious to make peace before this event took place. The Negus was being advised by his foreign counsellors, American and others to hold out.

2. My colleague stated that in his view a great effort should now be made to bring matters to a speedy conclusion. The Negus should be strongly urged that it was in his own interest to come to terms as quickly as possible

¹ This telegram was drafted on March 29.

² No. 176; this interview in fact took place on March 27.

and to begin direct negotiations at once. Could not and would not Great Britain use her great influence to this effect? Certainly the terms of peace would today be stiffer than some months ago but Signor Mussolini had stated they would not be a 'diktat'. All French opinion was consolidating against continuance of sanctions. It did not distinguish between Italian and German cases, indeed the latter's action was considered as more deserving of sanctions. If peace were not made before decisive battle what would happen? Signor Mussolini would after victory insist on terms which could not be approved by Great Britain. There would then be a clash between Great Britain and Italy with serious consequences for Europe and a most awkward question would arise for France. He felt convinced that France would not in such circumstances continue sanctions and a further and grave difficulty between our two countries would thus unhappily arise. In his view time was essential question and negotiations through Monsieur de Madariaga were likely to be slow and difficult.

3. I replied that I much doubted whether we should be prepared to give advice on above lines to the Negus and even if we did whether the Negus would be prepared or able to act on it. Further, the indications given by the Italians of their present peace conditions were not favourable. Signor Mussolini and speakers in the Senate had declared that all territories conquered by the Italian troops were sacred to the Fatherland. Official spokesman had proposed not only cessation of sanctions but also annulment of Geneva sentence. This latter point was new to my colleague but he remarked that Signor Mussolini had given him no indication of it and indeed [?] only confirmed his argument in favour of immediate and direct negotiations between the Negus and Signor Mussolini. If these succeeded sanctions would stop automatically and he believed Signor Mussolini could be persuaded not to press annulment side. I answered I did not feel so certain of this as Signor Mussolini might well try to make some mitigation of the League decision a condition of his return to the European concert on the Stresa front. Such a condition would clearly be totally unacceptable.

4. To sum up, my colleague believes that the Italians will shortly have a decisive victory. He is most anxious that direct peace negotiations should be started before the battle begins, and he understands that Signor Mussolini is ready to talk at once. He feels that the League will get better terms now than later. Above all he is fearful lest the question of the continuance of sanctions may cause a serious breach between France and Great Britain. I should perhaps add that my colleague is a strong supporter of Anglo-French friendship and is anxious to see the Stresa front restored.³

Repeated to Paris.

³ There are a number of references to a meeting in Mr. Eden's room at the Foreign Office on March 30, to discuss the present state of Señor Madariaga's negotiations. In a minute on this telegram Mr. Peterson wrote: "The Secretary of State indicated at a meeting this morning that our policy will be to press Señor Madariaga to produce evidence of progress with his work of conciliation: and that if, as seems probable from all the available indications, no progress can be reported, the Committee of Thirteen should be reconvened

in order to register the failure and pave the way for the Committee of Eighteen to meet again and consider further sanctions.

Meanwhile this French view, which I agree with Mr. Thompson represents that of the French Government as well as M. Chambrun, appears highly unsatisfactory, and perhaps it would be as well to instruct Sir George Clerk to let the French know that in our view the only possibility of achieving an early settlement is to bring pressure to bear upon Italy to treat the Committee of Thirteen's overture seriously. M. Peterson. 30th March, 1936.' Mr. Eden approved the action proposed on April 3: see No. 207 below. Mr. Strang also referred to this meeting in a minute of March 30: see No. 183 below.

No. 183

Note by Mr. Strang concerning the League of Nations enquiry into the use of poison gas

[J 2706/587/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 30, 1936

After the meeting in the Secretary of State's room this morning,¹ I telephoned to Mr. Walters at Geneva and asked him what was the position as regards the enquiry which M. de Madariaga had been instructed by the Committee of Thirteen to make of the Italian Government on the subject of the use of poison gas by the Italian forces in Abyssinia.²

He told me that M. de Madariaga's communication to Signor Mussolini on this subject was despatched from London on the 23rd March, that is, on the same day as the meeting of the Committee of Thirteen. I annex a copy of M. de Madariaga's letter,³ the terms of which Mr. Walters gave me by telephone. The meetings of the Committee of Thirteen are held in private and the terms of this letter have not been made public. A copy of the letter will be communicated officially to us by M. de Madariaga when he makes his report on the various steps he has taken in conformity with the instructions of the Committee of Thirteen.

I asked Mr. Walters whether M. de Madariaga was likely to press the Italian Government for a reply. He said that M. de Madariaga had also written to the Italian Government asking them to nominate someone to discuss with him the possibility of peace negotiations. If no reply was shortly forthcoming to either of these communications, he thought that M. de Madariaga might quite well ask the Secretary-General to enquire of the Italian Government when replies might be expected.

I told Mr. Walters that in view of the bombing of Harrar this question had acquired immediate importance. He entirely agreed and said that the

¹ Cf. No. 182, note 3.

² Cf. No. 158.

³ This letter referred to the deliberations of the Committee of Thirteen and said that the Committee would be happy to receive the observations of the Italian Foreign Minister on the subject of the allegations of the Ethiopian Government 'touchant l'emploi par l'armée italienne des gaz asphyxiants, toxiques ou similaires'. It is printed in *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

Secretary-General had now received several further communications from the Ethiopian Government relating to the latest events at Harrar.

No. 184

Extract from notes of a meeting of ministers held on March 30, 1936
[C 2528/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 30, 1936

1. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs handed round a Memorandum regarding Part III of the proposals of the 19th March (Appendix).¹ There was a pause to enable Ministers to read the Memorandum.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said his objective was to despatch the draft letter (Annex III of the Appendix) as soon as possible. He had received suggestions for another meeting of the Locarno Powers, other than Germany, at Brussels.² He was opposed to any such meeting. There was very little to do except to comment on the anticipated German reply. An abortive meeting would be unfortunate. If Herr Hitler's document which he had promised for the morrow, contained anything new, he thought that the best procedure would be for the British, French and Belgian Governments through the diplomatic channel to concert a series of questions to be put to the Germans on the assumption that they wished to negotiate. He had in mind what M. Flandin had said that if the whole situation was to be cleared up he would be willing to meet the Germans in conference. Consequently, the questions should be of a searching character. Their preparation might be undertaken while the French elections were in progress, after which a meeting might take place.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer thought that the French object in suggesting a meeting was to register that the negotiations with Germany had failed. In reply to the First Lord,³ he thought that the reason why the French appeared to be working against a settlement was that they did not believe in the genuineness of Herr Hitler's offers.

The discussion then focused upon the General Staff conversations proposed in Annex I. There was general agreement that we were committed to these conversations under Section III of the White Paper⁴ and could not repudiate them. It would, however, be important to lay down very carefully the agenda for the conversations and the instructions to the officers taking part. Otherwise, there was a grave risk of their being extended unduly. In particular, it was suggested that it was important to make clear that their purpose was as provided in Annex I of the Appendix and not Annex III(d).

The Chancellor of the Exchequer pointed out that the conversations referred to in Annexes I and II of the Appendix were the same as those

¹ Printed as No. 180.

² See No. 178.

³ Viscount Monsell.

⁴ See No. 144.

provided for in Section III of the White Paper of March 19th (Cmd. 5134) and that their object was to arrange the technical conditions for giving effect to our existing obligations under the Treaty of Locarno under which we gave a guarantee without receiving one from France and Belgium. The conversations referred to in Annex III(d) of the Appendix, on the other hand, were those referred to in paragraph 1(d) of the letter to be addressed to France and Belgium. These latter conversations had the object of preventing an unprovoked aggression. In this case we received a guarantee as well as giving one, and it was conceivable that the measures taken might include a Pact of Mutual Assistance.

The Secretary of State for Air⁵ urged that it should be made clear that the Staff conversations which were to be held *now* are only intended for the case of an attack by Germany within the next few months, and that they involved no new obligation. The question could be put in two forms:

- (i) Are we under an obligation to help France and Belgium if attacked?
- (ii) If we are under such an obligation, how can we fulfil it without prior conversations?

The Secretary of State for War⁶ pointed out that if we were to have conversations now it would make any Treaty of the Locarno system impossible for the reason that it was impossible to have conversations with two parties.

The Lord Chancellor⁷ pointed out that we had given a perfectly definite undertaking on March 19th and were bound to give effect to it.

The Secretary of State for Air agreed and saw no difficulty provided the conversations were fixed for a limited period.

The Lord President of the Council⁸ said the first thing to be done was to draft a very careful terms of reference to the General Staffs concerned. If not, the conversations would be roaming all over the place. He thought it difficult in practice to keep entirely separate the conversations under Annex I from those in Annex II.

The Secretary of State for Air pointed out that our General Staff Officers would presumably be asked by the French what forces we were prepared to send and where. Those questions would be put on the assumption of a state of war. The French would next ask what would be the consequences of war and what our future intentions were.

The Home Secretary⁹ asked whether the conversation involved a decision to send an Expeditionary Force to the Low Countries.

The Lord Chancellor pointed out that this could not be done. The French would be told that we would mobilise the Navy; that we should be able to use such and such a force of aircraft, and that the Army was not ready to go abroad.

The Secretary of State for War pointed out that we could in fact send two Divisions though they would not be up to date and would be for the most part equipped with horse transport.

⁵ Viscount Swinton.

⁶ Mr. J. R. MacDonald.

⁶ Mr. A. Duff Cooper.

⁷ Viscount Hailsham.

⁹ Sir J. Simon.

The Lord President thought that what the French really wanted was that the meeting should take place. It would be wise to tell our General Staffs to keep the discussion somewhat general, otherwise it would be difficult to limit its scope to Section III of the White Paper. The General Staff would have to be very carefully instructed owing to the difficulty of dividing technical conditions and giving effect to Locarno from those of the conversations to take place in the event of a break-down of negotiations. The Cabinet would have to have very clearly in their mind what they meant by the conversations referred to in Annex I of the Foreign Office Memorandum.

The Secretary of State for War pointed out that the General Staff Officers could only tell the French and Belgians what *could* be done. What *would* be done was a political decision.

One suggestion was that when the meeting took place the other Staffs might be asked first to formulate their questions.

Another suggestion was that they should be asked to formulate the questions before the meeting.

On the whole, however, it was thought better to let the questions be formulated at the meeting after which it might be necessary for our delegates to adjourn the meeting while they obtained further instructions.

Referring to a suggestion that the French General Staff might demand measures on our part to increase our forces (e.g. by compulsory military service), the Minister for Defence Co-ordination¹⁰ pointed out that under Locarno we were only bound to go to the help of France and Belgium. It would be sufficient for our General Staffs to go to the meeting to discuss how far *existing forces* could best be used.

The Prime Minister pointed out that this meant little more than that we had an obligation to go to a meeting to expose how empty was our cupboard. It might be added in the course of the conversation that the Government had received a mandate to re-equip our Forces, but that at present we could not give any effective help. Moreover, if we got involved in a war it would very likely throw back the whole process of re-equipment. It would do good to get into the heads of the French that this was the case and that at the moment we could give very little help.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed, and pointed out that, in reply to the French contention that, if the position vis-à-vis Germany was bad to-day, it would be worse two years hence, it could be stated that our own Air Forces were so weak to-day that we could not do Germany much harm, but that in two years' time we should be able to hit her fairly hard.

The Home Secretary agreed that we were committed to the conversations referred to in Annexes I and II of the Appendix, but pointed out that if the conversations took place there would be no prospect of any serious proposals from Germany.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs did not agree to this. The Germans had broken a Treaty, entered the Demilitarised Zone, weakened French security, and, in the circumstances, Herr Hitler had no right to

¹⁰ Sir T. Inskip.

complain if conversations took place, though he admitted that of course he would complain.

The Home Secretary asked why Annex I of the Appendix was necessary at all. Was a fresh declaration by Belgium, France and the United Kingdom really necessary? Would it not suffice merely to act on Section III of the White Paper of March 19th (Cmd. 5134/36)?

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that the agreement in the White Paper had no validity because the Italians had not accepted it. The object of Annex I to his Memorandum (Appendix)¹ was to give validity to Annex III of the White Paper.

The Secretary of State for Air doubted the wisdom of concluding a new formal declaration 'done at London, etc.' People were very suspicious of every new document. He suggested something in the nature of an exchange of Notes.

The Prime Minister also disliked a new formal document. He pointed out that the French were never in a hurry when we wanted an answer to a question. Before any decision was taken he would like the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to report to the Cabinet on Wednesday.¹¹

After a little further discussion Ministers agreed:

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should remind the French Ambassador that we had undertaken under Section III of the proposals contained in the White Paper (Cmd. 5134/36) to hold conversations with the French and Belgian General Staffs. He should add that we had no intention of going back on this undertaking so long as the conversations were confined to the terms set out in Section III and provided they complied with the following understanding set forth in his speech in the House of Commons on Thursday, 26th March,¹² viz:

'It is understood that this contact does not imply any political undertaking or any obligation as regards defence organisation between the two parties'.

He should, at his discretion, point out, however, that while the Government adhered to their undertaking, public opinion was rather anxious about the conversations and the French Government must not press us to go too fast. He might add that he proposed to bring the question before the Cabinet on Wednesday.¹³

¹¹ April 1.

¹² See No. 163, note 4.

¹³ An extract from a later part of the discussion shows that Mr. Eden was 'most anxious to send the letter without delay', but Mr. Baldwin 'thought that the Cabinet ought to have an opportunity to consider the matter before the letter was sent'. Mr. Eden agreed to hold up the letter until after the next meeting of the Cabinet on April 1.

Extract from notes of a meeting of ministers held on March 30, 1936¹

[J 2737/45/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 30, 1936*

5. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed his colleagues that the League of Nations Committee of Thirteen at their last Meeting² had decided to ask the Italians to reply to the Abyssinian charges re the use of poison gas. He did not know what action the Secretary General had taken but would enquire. He himself felt that we ought to take a strong line on the subject. The 'Dictator' countries, he understood, held large quantities of poison gas in stock which was not the case of the democratically governed countries. If this episode was allowed to pass without protest, it would create a bad precedent for the use of gas in European warfare. He proposed that in the Debate in the House of Lords that same afternoon³ it should be stated that the matter lay in the hands of the Committee of Thirteen: that His Majesty's Government take a serious view of the Italian action: that they did not wish to prejudice the position of the Committee of Thirteen in the matter by independent action at this moment.

In reply to the Prime Minister he said that the only action the League of Nations could take beyond the protest, was to apply further sanctions e.g., an oil sanction.

Ministers were reminded that the Italians had produced photographs of the most horrible atrocities by the Abyssinians and would claim that the use of gas was only a retaliatory measure.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that if the Committee of Thirteen did not get an answer soon, we ought to stir them up.

The First Lord of the Admiralty referring to sanctions reminded his colleagues that we could not stir up trouble everywhere at once. If Italy was to be antagonised we should be powerless in Northern Europe.⁴

¹ Cf. No. 184. The discussions described in these extracts took place on the morning of March 30, and are evidently linked with the departmental meeting which also took place that morning: cf. No. 182, note 3. It is not clear which took place first.

² See No. 158.

³ See 100 *H.L. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 340-59.

⁴ The strategical situation in the Mediterranean was discussed at the 276th Meeting of the C.I.D. on April 3, when Mr. Eden remarked that he was 'disturbed as to the Naval position in Home waters and asked whether it would not be possible to remedy it to some extent by the withdrawal of some ships from the Mediterranean'. Sir E. Chatfield said that to withdraw the requisite amount of force from the Mediterranean would not materially improve our position in home waters and its effect in the Mediterranean would be undesirable. The C.I.D. concluded by agreeing, 'To accept the technical advice put forward as to the undesirability at the present time, and in the existing political situation, of withdrawal of Naval Forces from the Mediterranean'.

Letter from Mr. Law to Mr. Sargent

[C 2825/4/18]

*Extract**March 30, 1936*

My dear Moley,

I did not write to you at the end of last week because I wanted first to see the full extent of the impression made by the Secretary of State's memorable speech last Thursday.¹ It has been immediate and surprising. There has been an almost complete change in the City. I do not wish to imply that opinion in the City has suddenly become pro-French. Something far more satisfactory has occurred. It has become pro-British. I hope that it will now maintain this position of equilibrium.

Let me try to analyze this feeling a little further. The ultra pro-Germans have shifted to the point where they see a long period of negotiations ahead. They now recognize however that the next move must be made by the Germans. They understand and approve the reasons for the steps which H.M. Government have hitherto taken, and, while still believing that it will be possible to enter into the dove-cote (I almost wrote columbarium!) which Hitler is offering to us, they appreciate that some sign must be made by him that he understands the meaning of a treaty before we can again accept his signature. Consequently they realize that the awaited recovery of the Stock Exchange here is not, after all, just round the corner and therefore they are less impatient of negotiations which appear to delay the expected settlement. Those who were previously puzzled by the complications of the affair and had allowed their normal anti-French feelings to guide them, now realize that there are after all good grounds for French suspicions. They still believe that Hitler is sincere when he offers peace, but they begin to wonder whether in a few years' time he may not be equally sincere in threatening war as an alternative to acquiescence in some new demand. Finally, there are a few who believe that all the German peace offers are nothing more than bluff and that only a well armed watch can save us from another catastrophe.

The remark in the speech most often quoted—and with entire approval by all—is when Mr. Eden said he would not be the first to dishonour the signature of this country. That phrase seems to have awakened a spark too often damped down by the rhodomontades of the runaway press. (If only politicians could more often see how courage *pays*.) Next in importance in moving public opinion here was the very lucid account of the history which led up to the signature of the Locarno Treaty. For after all people here are not bad but only very, very ignorant.

Lastly I think that when all praise has been given to the Secretary of State, we must not withhold our gratitude from Mr. Lloyd George, who by putting into words the very feelings of this City but a week ago, has made

¹ See No. 163, note 4.

everything which they previously held so dear at once ridiculous and a little dishonest.²

If there still remain any doubts about the wisdom of our action up to the present, it centres round the proposal for eventual conversations between the British and French staffs. It is of course a feeling dependent on lazy thinking and therefore both typical of British mentality but also not difficult to rectify. It must be pointed out that a vague promise of support to the French is useless without some practical scheme for its application, and that the same need was felt in order to make really valuable the support in the Mediterranean which the French fleet offered to give to us. The doubt yields to treatment on these lines.

The result of the German election has of course impressed no one.³ It is treated as a ludicrous travesty of democracy which only a country totally devoid of humour could indulge in. And a country which has no sense of humour is already half damned here.

I am convinced that all the rumours of a German loan which have been exercising the minds of people outside the City, emanate from one source only. A German called at our office the other day and told us he had been discussing the question with the individual⁴ whom I have in mind. This individual had led him to believe that a large German loan might be floated in London next year. Such an idea is scouted everywhere else and it can be safely ascribed to this one source.

Yours ever,
NIGEL

² Presumably a reference to Mr. Lloyd George's speech in the debate of March 26 (see note 1); see 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1472-82.

³ In the elections for the Reichstag on March 29 the National Socialist Party received 98.79 per cent of the votes cast.

⁴ In a note to Sir R. Vansittart forwarding this letter Mr. Sargent remarked: "The 'individual' in the last paragraph is I understand Tiarks." Mr. F. C. Tiarks was a Director of the Bank of England.

No. 187

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received March 31, 12.5 p.m.)

No. 140 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2521/4/18]

Most Immediate

BERLIN, March 31, 1936

I learn privately that Prime Minister's statement yesterday in the House of Commons regarding General Staff conversations¹ has in Chancellor's

¹ In reply to a question by Lieut.-Commander Fletcher as to whether a minister would join the British generals in these conversations, Mr. Baldwin said: 'I do not think that such a practice as the hon. and gallant Member suggests would be a good one, for the simple reason that the mere presence of a Minister at any conference of this kind would lend an importance to the conference in the public eyes and in other respects which the conference really has not. A technical conference in that way might become much more serious.' See 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 1625.

opinion introduced a new factor into position. German government are now reconsidering terms of their reply but it is possible that Herr von Ribbentrop may be able to leave today.

No. 188

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 92 Telegraphic [C 2508/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 31, 1936, 6.15 p.m.*

I told the French Ambassador yesterday that though there had so far only been a preliminary meeting of Ministers¹ and the Cabinet would not be held until April 1st I was in a position to tell him that His Majesty's Government was in agreement that the undertaking in Section III of the proposals in the White Paper to hold conversations with the French and Belgian Staffs still stood. These conversations would of course be confined to the terms set out in Section III, and subject to that proviso and one other condition, we were willing that they should begin. The condition was set out in my speech in the House of Commons,² namely 'It is understood that this contact does not imply any political undertaking or any obligation as regards defence organisation between the two parties'. This condition had its counterpart in the Franco-Belgian Agreement,³ and I therefore presumed that the French Government would have no difficulty in agreeing to it. It would save time if His Excellency would get into touch with his Government at once and let me have their reply on Wednesday April 1st when after the Cabinet I should wish to see him again.

The Ambassador replied that he had noticed the condition in my speech, and that he would certainly communicate with his Government. At the same time I would realise that it was the outcome of months of negotiation with the Belgian Government, and was only eventually agreed to to appease the Flemish section of the Belgian people.⁴ I said that I must have a specific assurance on the matter before the conversations could begin.

The Ambassador asked whether I was in a position to give him the letter. I replied that I was not. In a matter of this importance I must obtain approval for the despatch of the text, more particularly since Italy had not agreed to the proposals in the White Paper. The Ambassador expressed some uneasiness at the effect of my communication on his Government, and added that he had already told them that I did not want to have a meeting of the three Locarno Powers in the near future after the receipt of the German

¹ See No. 184.

² See No. 163, note 4.

³ Of March 6; cf. No. 174, note 4.

⁴ In his despatch No. 574 of March 30 extending this telegram, Mr. Eden commented: 'I replied that I was not aware of this, but that if Belgium had Flemings, we had Welshmen. A considerable section of our public opinion viewed these conversations with grave misgivings.'

reply. It was for this reason that no official invitation had been issued. Nonetheless the French Government still desired such a meeting more particularly in the event of the German reply being wholly negative. It would then be necessary to consider, as set out in paragraph 1(a) of the letter 'in consultation . . . the steps to be taken to meet the new situation thus created'.⁵

I replied that it was difficult to deal with these hypothetical questions until we had received the German reply. I warned the Ambassador that His Majesty's Government would take a lot of convincing that conciliation had failed. In the meanwhile I thought the French Government would be wise to confine themselves to what was undertaken in Section III of the proposals. I would repeat to the Ambassador that I did not see what useful purpose could be served by the Three Powers meeting, unless these Powers had some idea beforehand what they proposed to do at the meeting. In this connexion I had been interested to read the speech made by Monsieur Flandin on March 29th.⁶ Would it perhaps be possible for us to consider a number of questions that the Three Powers might agree to put to the German Government on the receipt of their answer? These questions might serve both to elucidate the position and to impress on German and other opinion the kind of help required if our negotiations were to succeed. The Ambassador thought there was a wide distinction between what Monsieur Flandin had said in a public speech and the tabling of similar questions by a conference of Locarno Powers without Germany, supposing that Germany had returned a negative answer. That would be too much like ignoring altogether Germany's violation of her obligations and simply asking questions with a view to opening up further negotiations. The essential thing, as I had admitted in my speech, was to find some way of justifying international law. If Germany would not contribute, then the Locarno Powers would have to consider what they should do in the matter.

I said to the Ambassador that I was afraid I did not appreciate what he had in mind when he spoke about what the Locarno Powers should do, and it was exactly because I was in ignorance of the views of the French and of the Belgian Governments on this matter that I thought it was very desirable that we should be informed of this through the diplomatic channel before any meeting was arranged. It would be very unfortunate if the three Powers were to meet and a wrangle was then to develop as to what course we were going to take. That would not do anybody any good. I would give the Ambassador an illustration of what I meant. If, for instance the French Government were going to say to us at the conference they were anxious to convene 'since the Germans have not returned an affirmative reply to the conditions set out in the White Paper, nor have contributed anything else to take their place, we therefore think the Germans must be turned out of the Rhine', our answer would of course at once be that we did not agree. I felt

⁵ Cf. No. 144.

⁶ Speaking to his constituents at Vézelay, M. Flandin posed a number of questions as to Herr Hitler's intentions; see *The Times*, March 30, 1936, p. 12.

sure that the French Government would not suggest any such thing, but I was merely indicating the danger that might arise in a meeting of the Three or Four Locarno Powers if nothing had been prepared.

Monsieur Corbin said that he was sure that the French Government had not military sanctions in mind. At the same time it was necessary to do something. I urged that all this discussion further emphasised the need for clearing the ground before we met anywhere again. Finally I undertook to give him a definite reply on the subject of the letter on April 1st.

Repeated to Brussels No. 50, Rome No. 115 and Moscow No. 57.

No. 189

Minute on staff conversations by Sir R. Vansittart for Mr. Eden

[C 2702/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 31, 1936

May I put a little more fully the point which I began to discuss this afternoon when other more pressing matters supervened?

May I suggest, and I would suggest it with some emphasis, that in these discussions we should keep any reference to our limitations within the lines of parity with our own discussions with the French in December last year?¹ By this I mean that we should say to them, as they said to us then (e.g. in particular the reorganisation of the Air Force) that we are also in the train of reorganising or re-equipping our forces both at sea and on land (and you will remember that the French in December also made considerable limitations of what land assistance could have been given then). We therefore are not able *for the present* to undertake any commitments which are not in accordance with our factual capacities. This would be frankness and would be taken in the same spirit as we took the expression of their limitations last year. There is no need whatever for us to go beyond this and express any doubts as to our ever being able to send troops into Belgium (and the sending of troops into Belgium, not France, is all that the French General Staff expect of us in any event). If we begin throwing cold water on our capacities for an indefinite future, we shall wreck the prospect of collaboration here and now. No Frenchman or Belgian would ever accept the proposition that they could do the land fighting and we would, for our own convenience, limit ourselves to air and sea. Moreover, in case Belgium ever was reinvaded it would be the height of folly to suppose that the position could in fact be held by such restrictions on our part. There would on the contrary be an immediate collapse.

But my whole point, and I put it very strongly, is, in the words of the two Black Crows, 'Why bring that up now?' It is wholly unnecessary, and everything which is unnecessary is dangerous. Whereas we shall be quite

¹ See Volume XV, Appendix II.

safe if we remain with frankness within bounds similar to those adopted by the French in December.²

R. V.

² A note by Mr. Eden reads: 'I agree. A. E.'

No. 190

Note by Mr. Strang concerning the initiation of Italo-Ethiopian peace negotiations

[J 2735/587/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 31, 1936

I spoke to Mr. Walters at Geneva this afternoon, on the Secretary of State's instructions, about the present situation of the work of the Committee of Thirteen.

He told me that M. de Madariaga had so far not received any reply from the Italian Government to his letter of March 23rd¹ about the use of gas, etc. by the Italian forces in Abyssinia.

His letter to Signor Mussolini asking him to nominate a representative to discuss the possibility of opening peace negotiations had been despatched from Paris on March 27th or 28th.² Mr. Walters explained that the outcome of M. de Madariaga's interview with Signor Grandi in London had prevented his making a formal approach to the Italian Government on this subject at an earlier date. Mr. Walters was unwilling, over the telephone, to be more explicit on this point. The letter had, however, been couched in urgent and pressing terms.

I said that we were disturbed at the situation which had arisen. An invitation had been addressed by the Committee of Thirteen to both parties to open peace negotiations. Both parties had, in varying terms, declared their readiness to do so. Meantime, however, the Italian Government, so far from thinking of peace, were apparently organising a large scale attack in the South, and were using every possible means, legal and illegal, to break the resistance of the Abyssinian Government and people in order, one would suppose, to be in a better position to negotiate once the rains began. In their contacts with M. de Madariaga they were naturally, therefore, playing for time, and it seemed to us undesirable that the Committee of Thirteen should have the appearance of lending itself to this manœuvre.

Mr. Walters said that if it was true that, as he understood, existing sanctions were having an appreciable effect in Italy, time was perhaps as much on the side of the League as of Italy, but he agreed that the moment had come for M. de Madariaga to take some step to indicate to the Italian Government his desire for an early reply to his communications. He

¹ Cf. No. 183.

² Signor Suvich said later that the letter was dated March 27; it is printed in *L.N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

thought that the best thing would be for M. de Madariaga to make it known in Rome that he proposed to make a report on the situation to the Committee of Thirteen within the next week or so, and to ask for replies before that date. Whether the replies came in or not, M. de Madariaga could make his report to the Committee, and it would then be for the Committee to decide whether or not a new meeting was necessary. M. de Madariaga could hardly on his own initiative call a fresh meeting of the Committee without at least first consulting some of its principal members, and in any event it would, in Mr. Walters' opinion, be risky to call a meeting of the Committee of Thirteen at all unless some member, or members, of the Committee were prepared to take a clear and definite line when the Committee did meet.

I said that the essential thing was that M. de Madariaga should now show some sign of activity. If in the course of the next week or so no satisfactory replies had been received from the Italian Government, and if the situation was then as menacing as at present, M. de Madariaga might well feel that he could no longer continue to bear unaided the responsibility which the Committee had placed upon him, and might wish to call the Committee together to re-consider the situation. If that was so, His Majesty's Government would of course be ready to send a representative.

Mr. Walters said that he would confer with M. Avenol, who would probably wish to consult M. de Madariaga as to the course to be pursued. He would bear in mind what I had said. I said that I had spoken by way of indication rather than request, but with the Secretary of State's authority.³

³ A minute by Mr. Eden read: 'Thank you. This is admirable. A. E. 31st Mar.' In a further note of April 2 Mr. Strang wrote that Mr. Walters had telephoned from Geneva that afternoon to say that M. de Madariaga had still apparently had no reply to his letter to the Italian Government about poison gas; but it had been announced on the wireless from Milan that afternoon that an affirmative reply was being sent by the Italian Government to his second letter, inviting the nomination of someone to confer with him about peace negotiations. M. de Madariaga contemplated an early meeting of the Committee of Thirteen, as he apparently felt that he could not continue to bear the responsibility alone.

No. 191

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received April 4)

No. 95 Saving: Telegraphic [J 2810/54/1]

ROME, April 1, 1936

My telegram No. 94 Saving.¹

Following are translations of *communiqués* Nos. 170 and 171 issued this evening.

¹ This telegram from Rome of March 31 gave the text of the Italian *communiqué* No. 169, issued that evening, describing certain Italian military operations in Ethiopia during March.

Communiqué No. 170.

Marshal Badoglio telegraphs:

Yesterday the Negus with his best troops began a big battle in the Lake Ascianghi area.

The battle which at times was extremely violent ended with the victory of our troops.

Later details will be given in a following *communiqué*.

Communiqué No. 171.

Marshal Badoglio telegraphs:

A big battle took place yesterday the 31st March in the Lake Ascianghi area in the direction of Quoram.

The army of the Negus including the Guards troops armed with modern weapons of every kind attacked our positions to the south of Mai Ceu.

The day ended with the complete victory of our armies.

The Abyssinian action, which had been foreseen, took place between six o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening in a series of frontal and enveloping attacks which were beaten off.

In the afternoon our national and Eritrean troops counter-attacked and put to flight the enemy who withdrew in disorder to the valley of the Mekan, bombarded by aeroplanes and artillery.

The losses suffered by the troops of the Negus are very heavy; they are estimated at 7,000 dead, among them several sub-chiefs.

Many prisoners have been captured and immense quantities of arms.

Our total losses are: officers, 12 dead; 44 wounded; national soldiers, 51 dead, 152 wounded; Eritreans, about 800 dead and wounded.

Our air force participated keenly and efficaciously in the battle being made the target of a vigorous anti-aircraft fire which struck many machines.

From information obtained from the prisoners it appears that the Abyssinian troops taking part in the battle numbered about 20 thousand and that the Negus personally participated in the attack against our left flank.

In the western sector our columns are moving forward from Addi Remoz towards the south, and are received with exhibitions of sympathy by the population.

All the chiefs of the vast area of the Wollkai, which stretches as far as the Casa river, have presented themselves to our military command at Addi Romez to make their submission. A group of notables of the Tsegghede has also arrived at that place to present the homage of that population.

At Bulale (to the south of Dagah Bur) the Somaliland air force has bombarded the headquarters of the Abyssinian army of Harar and columns on the march along the Jarer river. Anti-aircraft fire, particularly violent, did not prevent all the objectives from being struck.

No. 192

Minute by Mr. Harcourt-Smith¹

[C 2723/97/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 1, 1936*

The gist of what my informant² told me was as follows.

He had in the last few weeks seen a great deal of Herr von Ribbentrop whom he has known for many years. The latter had on several occasions expressed anxiety lest any encouragement, official or otherwise, should be given here to the agitation for the return to Germany of her former colonies. If Germany obtained colonies, the next stage would be a campaign for 'Gleichberechtigung' on the sea, on the grounds that colonies were useless unless your communications with them could be assured in time of war. Thus the Anglo-German Naval Agreement would be placed in jeopardy, and the sympathies of this country alienated from the Third Reich. This would be a calamity which the moral triumph of recovering the colonies would not offset.

¹ The minute was addressed to Mr. Wigram. Mr. S. G. Harcourt-Smith was a Second Secretary in the Foreign Office.

² The identity of this informant was not revealed.

No. 193

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 400 [C 2532/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 1, 1936*

Sir,

The Lord Privy Seal and I received Herr von Ribbentrop this morning on his return to London. He was accompanied by Herr Dieckhoff.

2. Herr von Ribbentrop informed me that he had come to communicate to me the new German peace plan prepared by the Chancellor acting on the mandate received from the German people on March 29th.¹ Herr von Ribbentrop hoped and trusted that this plan would lead to the negotiations which all the nations desired and which would end in the consolidation of European peace.

3. Herr von Ribbentrop then read out the English translation of the German Government's communication, which appears as an Annex to this despatch.²

4. We first discussed the question of publication; and it was agreed that

¹ See No. 186, note 3.

² Not printed here: it is summarized in the Introductory Note to this Chapter, and printed in full in *D.G.F.P., op. cit.*, No. 242, and *D.D.F.*, Series 2, vol. ii, No. 2.

the document should be given to the press this evening for publication in the morning newspapers of April 2nd.³

5. Lord Halifax and I then put to Herr von Ribbentrop a number of questions on certain points dealt with in the document.

6. Herr von Ribbentrop explained that the four months period mentioned in the document was to cover periods (a) the period for elucidating the procedure of the negotiations and (b) the period of the actual negotiations: and that the whole period would continue until the end of July next.

7. I then remarked upon the condition (3) about the French and Belgian Governments acting in the same way as the German Government in respect of the position on their side of the frontier. His Excellency replied that the French had brought a number of new divisions into their fortress line. The German Government did not like this; but all they were asking was that in the early stage of the negotiations British influence should be used to restore to some extent the original position. There was no question of the German Government increasing their troops at the moment, but it was thought that His Majesty's Government might induce the French Government to restore more normal conditions on their side of the frontier. They had tripled or even quadrupled their forces in that region.

8. Lord Halifax said that he understood point 9 to refer to fortifications as well as to men.

9. He then enquired why with regard to point 10 the German Government had suggested a period of twenty-five years for the duration of the non-aggression pact. Why was the period not unlimited? Herr von Ribbentrop replied that in recent years it had been the custom to fix the period of ten years for the period of duration of these pacts. Monsieur Laval had, however, recently told one of Herr von Ribbentrop's friends that twenty-five years would be a better period. It was not that the German Government did not want an unlimited period of peace; but, as realists, they were inclined to think a period of twenty-five years (the span of a generation) better than an unlimited period. Herr von Dieckhoff referred at this point to Dr. Cuno's proposals of 1923⁴ which had envisaged a period of twenty-five years for such pacts.

10. Herr von Ribbentrop remarked with reference to points 10, 11 and 12 that the German Government was now not only ready to enter into non-aggression pacts but into mutual assistance pacts. This was new. It had originally been proposed that the Western non-aggression pact should be guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy; now the German Government were ready themselves to give mutual assistance to the other parties.

11. I enquired whether the German Government had definitely been unable to act on my proposal respecting the non-construction of fortifications during the interim period. Was it not possible even to give this undertaking if the French on their side also undertook not to construct during this period?

³ As in *The Times*, April 2, p. 9.

⁴ Dr. Wilhelm Cuno was Chancellor of Germany from November 22, 1922, to August 13, 1923.

12. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that the interim period was only one of four months. What could be done in four months? The German Government could not give any pledge in respect even of that period; but in fact, for technical reasons, it would be impossible to construct during the period.

13. I replied that I was not asking for this concession for any military reason but for psychological and political reasons. Herr von Ribbentrop said that the French knew perfectly well that nothing could, for technical reasons, be done during the interim period. I said that I was still looking for something which would help me during the interim limited period.

14. I said that there was one further point in the document to which I must refer, it was that of the Staff conversations. It was not possible that Germany, having denounced the Locarno Treaty, should still say that the other Powers should not have Staff conversations even during the interim period. Lord Halifax remarked that he thought that on this point the document referred not to the interim but to the later period. Herr Dieckhoff was understood to say that this was so; but Herr von Ribbentrop himself reiterated that the German people could not understand why Staff talks were necessary when there was no military menace. If European peace was desired any step likely to make a final settlement more difficult ought to be avoided.

15. Herr von Ribbentrop then enquired if it would not be more useful to start the negotiations in an atmosphere of calm, i.e. after the French elections.

16. I reminded him that in the White Paper we had asked the German Government for three concessions to bridge over the interim period. They had been able to give none of them. Therefore I was still in a great difficulty over the interim period. However I would carefully examine the document which Herr von Ribbentrop had communicated in consultation with my colleagues and I hoped that I might be in a position to see him again some time on the following day, April 2nd.

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 194

Memorandum¹ on staff conversations with the Locarno Powers

[C 2608/4/18]

2 WHITEHALL GARDENS, S.W.1, April 1, 1936

In view of the current proposals that there should be Staff Conversations between the Locarno Powers, we desire to submit some preliminary observations on this subject.

2. The position is complicated by the possibility that there may be two

¹ This memorandum was written by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the C.I.D., and circulated with the number 1224-B.

sets of such Conversations. The first set, as now contemplated under Section III of the White Paper (Cmd. 5134),² would take place between ourselves, France and Belgium, but at the moment presumably would exclude Italy. There may, further, be a subsequent set of Conversations³ with a view to possible later mutual assistance pacts which would be open to all the signatories, including Germany. In this connection, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs made the following statement in the House of Commons:

‘Those mutual assistance pacts, which I must emphasise, would, of course, be open to all the signatories of Locarno—I am talking now of the permanent settlement we wish to reach, not of the temporary arrangement to restore confidence—open to all the signatories, including Germany, would be supplemented by Staff Conversations on exactly the same lines and with the same limitations as I have stressed before. The general scheme of this central part of our proposal is very much like the scheme of the Air Pact, which has been under discussion for some time past.’⁴

3. We have always seen difficulties in carrying out Staff Conversations with the French and Belgians on one hand and with Germany on the other, and in our Report of February 1935 on the Air Pact (Paper No. C.O.S. 364, paragraph 15) we said:

‘This raises the difficulty that Conversations with France alone would be unfair to the other signatories, and Conversations with all signatories would clearly be out of the question.’⁵

4. The point is that Staff Conversations will almost inevitably entail the disclosure of detailed war plans for purposes of co-ordination, and neither France nor Germany is in the least likely to disclose her plans to us when she knows that we are carrying on, or have carried on, similar Conversations with other parties, and there is no certainty as to the side on which we might be fighting.

5. We adhere to the view which we have quoted above. The point arises in connection with the *preliminary* conversations now contemplated with the Locarno Powers, other than Germany, for the reason that such preliminary conversations may prejudice the possibility or usefulness of later negotiations for Military and Air Pacts in which Germany would be included.

6. We think it clear that full and unrestricted preliminary Conversations with France and Belgium are, in these circumstances, out of the question, and that it is essential that the Conversations immediately to be undertaken should be strictly limited in their scope in order to prejudice the future as little as possible. The instructions given to the Staffs should be very precise on this point.

7. We have already reported on the condition of our forces to meet the possibility of war with Germany. This Report (Paper No. C.O.S. 442) has

² No. 144.

³ *Note in original*: Under the provisions of paragraph 1(d) of the draft letter on page 7 of the same White Paper.

⁴ See No. 163, note 4.

⁵ Cf. Volume XII, No. 483.

been laid before the Cabinet, but has not been circulated to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and we, therefore, attach a copy to this Memorandum.⁶ A perusal of that Report will show how defenceless is this country so long as a large proportion of our naval, military and air forces is locked up in the Mediterranean; indeed, it may be said that until the Mediterranean situation is cleared up Conversations are of little practical value as a means of assessing our effective contribution to the allied cause. The naval position, for instance, is such that if we became involved in war at the present time with Germany, even if we at once mobilised, the defence of our coasts and of our trade would mainly fall upon French naval forces, and the Battle Cruisers would have to be withdrawn from the Mediterranean, thereby jeopardising our Mediterranean security. If we are seriously to consider the possibility of war with Germany, it is essential that the Services should be relieved of their Mediterranean responsibilities, otherwise our position is utterly unsafe.

8. It may be argued that Conversations carried out at the present time will at least open the eyes of the French to the weakness of our position and induce them to hold their hand. But that cannot be taken for granted. The mere fact that Conversations have taken place may encourage the French, who will assume, with justice, that we are morally committed to them. If they think that they are strong enough at the present time to undertake hostilities against Germany, we may find ourselves committed to participation with forces which are not only inadequate to render effective support, but incapable of assuring our own security with grave consequences to the people of this country.

9. Finally, if Staff Conversations are decided upon in the near future, as contemplated in Section III of the White Paper, we think there are advantages in their taking place in London rather than in Brussels and Paris. But if this is not possible, Brussels would be preferable to Paris.

ERNLE CHATFIELD

A. A. MONTGOMERY-MASSINGBERD

E. L. ELLINGTON

⁶ No. 134.

No. 195

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received April 2, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 194 Telegraphic [C 2587/4/18]

ROME, April 2, 1936, 12.20 a.m.

Signor Suvich this evening¹ in discussing German memorandum of which so far only summarised reports have appeared in Italian press stated that if there was to be a meeting of Locarno Powers in Brussels Italy would be

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 1.

represented as she had been in Paris and in London. She would not participate in any arrangements between General Staffs since she was practically under sentence of outlawry. In reply to question of mine he stated that should negotiations take place on German proposals Italy for her part would be ready to send an officer to participate in proposed commission of control. Signor Suvich added that he had not yet consulted head of Government on the last point but he was quite convinced that Italy would not refuse.

No. 196

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received April 3)

No. 6 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2611/4/18]

PARIS, April 2, 1936

My telegram No. 1 Saving.¹

I have just seen Minister for Foreign Affairs. He could not give me any official observations on the Chancellor's peace plan, as he had not yet discussed it with the President of the Council and the Cabinet, but he told me that he himself was very unfavourably impressed. The Chancellor refused everything in the White Paper of March 19th² and as for the constructive part of the German plan, it seemed to Monsieur Flandin to make an end of the League of Nations. Monsieur Flandin repeated that this was only a first impression and he would not, and could not, put forward a considered view till the plan had been closely examined by the French Cabinet and his own advisers.

Monsieur Flandin did not think that the view of the French Government could be formulated before next Monday.³ He understood that Monsieur van Zeeland was anxious for a meeting of the Locarno Powers on Wednesday, either in Brussels or Paris.

¹ In this telegram of April 1 Sir G. Clerk said that he had had a conversation that afternoon with M. Flandin, who did not wish to make 'official' comments on Herr Hitler's memorandum until he had seen the text of his proposals.

² No. 144.

April 6.

No. 197

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received April 3)

No. 7 Saving: Telegraphic [J 2785/89/1]

PARIS, April 2, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram saving.¹

M. Flandin said that a further preoccupation was the Italo-Abyssinian question and its bearing on the present situation with Germany. He was

¹ No. 196.

being subjected to increasing pressure to raise sanctions, pressure which was daily becoming more difficult for the Government to resist. He himself thought that the Negus would be well advised to seek peace now while there was still the chance of obtaining reasonable terms.

No. 198

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 417 [C 2615/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 2, 1936*

Sir,

Herr von Ribbentrop came to see me this morning. I told him that we had had time for a preliminary examination of the document which he had left with me yesterday.¹ I should like to tell him at once that we regarded the contents of this document as most important and as deserving of careful study. Such study we proposed now to give to the various proposals that the Chancellor had put forward. I wished to emphasize to Herr von Ribbentrop that our object in the present difficult situation was the same as it had been from the first. To seek to get negotiations going to bring about a final settlement. I asked Herr von Ribbentrop to assure the German Chancellor that His Majesty's Government would spare no effort to that end. I asked him also to tell Herr Hitler that we fully appreciated that the German Government had made an endeavour to meet the present difficult political situation. At the same time I felt bound to point out to him that in respect of the interim period, for which His Majesty's Government had particularly appealed for a contribution, the German Government had not been able to meet us. The difficulty of creating that sense of confidence in Europe which was an essential condition of successful negotiations, still remained. The question which now confronted us was what was the next step to be taken? It was clear to me that His Majesty's Government would have now to get into communication with other Governments. That would take a little time, and indeed I thought a pause at this moment would be valuable. I wished, however, that Herr von Ribbentrop would take away with him the definite assurance which I would ask him to give to the Chancellor on behalf of His Majesty's Government, that we would do the utmost in our power to secure from the troubled conditions of the present time a lasting European settlement.

2. In the conversation that ensued Herr von Ribbentrop made it quite clear that the German Government could agree to no limitations, however temporary, which could be held in any way to limit their sovereignty. For this reason no concession in respect of fortifications was possible. Indeed Herr von Ribbentrop went further. He maintained that it was not possible

¹ See No. 193, note 2. The document had in the meantime been discussed by the Cabinet, which met twice on April 1.

for him to approach the Chancellor to ask for any further concessions, for if he were to attempt to do that then he feared that the whole peace plan would be in peril. He had told me previously of the great difficulty which he had had in inducing the Chancellor to put forward a constructive proposal after his recent visit to London. The Chancellor had in fact only been willing to do so in response to the assurance that Herr von Ribbentrop had felt able to give him after his final interview with me that His Majesty's Government were really desirous to work for a European settlement. The Chancellor had felt that in those conditions he should do his utmost to co-operate. Hence the peace plan. It was really not possible after this plan to seek any further contribution from the German Government.

3. Herr von Ribbentrop also pressed me very strongly to agree to hold up any arrangements for Staff conversations. He said that he feared these must prejudice negotiations. I replied that on this matter His Majesty's Government's mind had been made up some time ago. Herr von Ribbentrop must realise that the German Government by their unilateral denunciation of the Locarno Treaty had shaken confidence in Europe. To restore confidence each Government had to make a contribution. Our contribution had been these Staff conversations. After German troops had marched into the zone, and after the League Council had pronounced upon this action, it would have been quite possible for the French Government to have called upon us to take some step which we might have been unwilling to take, and which would have placed us in a serious embarrassment in view of our obligations as a guarantor Power of Locarno. Actually Herr von Ribbentrop would be aware of the original French demands made in Paris. Now they had so far modified their attitude that it could indeed be said that the only compensatory element which was being given to them was Staff conversations, which only concern an unprovoked aggression against France or Belgium, as provided for under the Locarno Treaty. There could be no question of our refusing the French Government that measure of satisfaction to which, in my judgment, they were fully entitled.

4. Herr von Ribbentrop said he had difficulty in understanding our point of view, and argued that we could surely have our own view in virtue of our own sovereignty as to what form of assistance we should afford France and Belgium. In any event would it not be possible for us to make it clear to the French that our agreement upon Staff conversations was dependent upon their agreeing to enter into the general negotiations? I replied that this was to confuse the two issues. The object of the Staff conversations was to create a condition of confidence in which France and Belgium might be asked to negotiate. Moreover, it was not possible for us to attach a condition of the kind that Herr von Ribbentrop suggested to the fulfilment of our obligations under the Locarno Treaty.² Since the German Government were unable to assist us by offering any concession with respect to the non-fortification of

² The following passage was deleted at this point from the first draft of this despatch: 'and we did not share his view as to the relation of the rights of national sovereignty to the obligations of a Treaty'.

the zone for the period of negotiations, it was surely not possible for them to ask us to refuse the French and Belgian Governments Staff conversations under Locarno for which they had asked.

5. The discussion continued upon this same subject for some time without breaking any fresh ground. Eventually Herr von Ribbentrop turned to discuss procedure, and expressed a wish that the German Government should be kept in touch with the development of conversations which I had indicated that His Majesty's Government would have with the French and Belgian Governments.

6. Finally I told Herr von Ribbentrop that it would be necessary for me to say something to the House of Commons as to the progress of our conversation, and we agreed that I should do so in the sense of the opening paragraphs of this record.³

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

³ See 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 2303-4.

No. 199

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 601 [C 2614/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 2, 1936*

Sir,

The French Ambassador came to see me tonight when I handed him the text of the letter¹ and the covering note² (copy attached). The Ambassador gave me in return a letter³ containing an assurance that the French Government agreed with our view as to the limitation of staff conversations and he added that he hoped to be in a position to send me tonight on behalf of his Government the reciprocal assurance called forth by sub-paragraph (c) of the letter contained in the proposals of March 19th.⁴

2. The Ambassador stated that he was going to Paris tomorrow to see Monsieur Flandin and though he did not know what detailed suggestions the French Foreign Minister might have to put before him, he was confident that he would ask for an early meeting of the Locarno Powers without Germany. I replied that I had already received a message from Your Excellency which seemed to indicate that this was in M. Flandin's mind.⁵ He had even suggested that the meeting should take place in Brussels or Paris on Saturday or Monday. I once again made it clear to His Excellency that I did not favour an early meeting and that indeed I was opposed to a meeting at all, unless we were very clear in advance of the result which we

¹ Enclosure 2 below.

² Enclosure 1 below.

³ Not printed: see *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 5.

⁴ See No. 144.

⁵ See No. 196.

hoped to obtain. If, for instance, it were in the mind of the French Government to arrange for a meeting in order that we might take note of the breakdown of conciliation and that as a consequence the letter had come into force, then I must make it quite clear to him that it would be impossible for me to agree to any such course. In our view the efforts at conciliation were continuing and there could be no question of my going to Brussels or Paris merely to agree that they were not.

3. The Ambassador said that he appreciated the difficulty of the situation and he would put my point of view to M. Flandin. I said that I had one further suggestion that I wished to put into the Ambassador's mind—it was purely personal and preliminary. Might it not be appropriate before long to try and bring the League again into the forefront of our negotiations. The German proposals affected other Powers besides the Western Powers and it was very important to consider at an early date their reaction upon collective security and the League. It would be therefore unsatisfactory—indeed, in my view, fatal—to European peace in the end if we did not so handle the present situation as to maintain the authority of the League. Germany had asked to return to the League and it should therefore be for consideration whether the League could not be brought into the negotiations soon. The Ambassador said this was certainly a matter which ought to be considered, but it did not apply to the immediate stage which was a matter for the Locarno Powers.

4. I later communicated with the Ambassador with reference to the date of the staff conversations. His Excellency was anxious to be able to tell M. Flandin our ideas as to dates when the staff conversations might open. I replied that I was not yet in a position to do this, but I might be able to send him a message in the course of tomorrow afternoon. In the meanwhile I told the Ambassador that I had been much attracted by a suggestion which the Belgian Ambassador had made to me that the conversations might begin with the Military Attachés and that other participants might come over from Brussels and Paris at a later date.⁶

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

ENCLOSURE I IN NO. 199

Letter from Mr. Eden to M. Corbin⁷

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 1, 1936*

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to hand herewith to Your Excellency the letter contemplated in the Text of Proposals drawn up on March 19th by the Representatives of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Italy. Your Excellency will appreciate that the delivery of this

⁶ See No. 202 below.

⁷ This letter and the one following it were printed in a White Paper, *Miscellaneous No. 4 (1936)*, *Correspondence with the Belgian and French Ambassadors* (Cmd. 5149), pp. 4-6.

letter in no way implies that in the view of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the effort of conciliation referred to in this letter has failed. As you are aware we have today received from the German Government certain proposals which we have communicated to your Government and to which we are giving our immediate consideration.

Meanwhile His Majesty's Government are willing, in accordance with Paragraph III of the Proposals, to instruct their General Staffs forthwith to enter into contact with the French General Staffs, with a view to arranging the technical conditions in which the obligations referred to in that paragraph should be carried out in case of unprovoked aggression.

On behalf of His Majesty's Government I have the honour to state that it is understood that this contact between the General Staffs cannot give rise in respect of either Government to any political undertaking, nor to any obligation regarding the organisation of national defence. I shall be glad to have Your Excellency's confirmation that this is likewise the understanding of your Government.

His Majesty's Government propose that the conversations between the General Staffs of the two countries, necessary for establishing the contacts in question, should be begun in London.

I am addressing a similar letter to the Belgian Ambassador.⁸

I have, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 199

Letter from Mr. Eden to M. Corbin

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 1, 1936*

Your Excellency,

With reference to the 'Text of Proposals drawn up by the Representatives of Belgium, France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Italy', dated the 19th March, 1936, I am authorised to give you the official assurance that, if the effort of conciliation attempted in the arrangement there proposed should fail, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom:

1. (a) Will at once consider, in consultation with your Government and the Belgian Government, the steps to be taken to meet the new situation thus created;

(b) Will immediately come to the assistance of your Government, in accordance with the Treaty of Locarno, in respect of any measures which shall be jointly decided upon;

(c) Will, in return for reciprocal assurances from your Government, take, in consultation with your Government all practical measures available to His Majesty's Government for the purpose of ensuring the security of your country against unprovoked aggression;

⁸ Not printed. The text was the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as that to the French Government: see the White Paper, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-4.

(d) Will, for this purpose, establish or continue the contact between the General Staffs of our two countries contemplated in paragraph III(2) of the said arrangement;

2. And furthermore, will subsequently endeavour at the Council of the League of Nations to secure the formulation by the latter of all useful recommendations for the maintenance of peace and the respect for international law.

I have, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 200

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received April 3, 10.25 a.m.)
No. 152 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 2794/45/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, April 3, 1936

Minister for Foreign Affairs¹ has just called to inform me of report received from the Emperor regarding battle south of Amba Alagi on March 31st and April 1st. Following is the gist.

Ethiopian army attacked the Italian positions and succeeded in taking four out of seven fortified points. Italians employed gas and bombs which Ethiopians attempted to neutralise by hand to hand fighting. Imperial Guard were in action for the first time and acquitted themselves well. There were heavy casualties on both sides but the Emperor and principal chiefs are safe. Fighting was continuous for 12 hours up to 7 p.m. April 1st when victory was still in doubt.

The Minister added that Italians had advanced to within six hours of Gondar on April 1st and Ras Imaru and Dejazmach Ayalewu had reported from Dankaz (south east of Gondar) that they were returning eastwards to join the Emperor presumably because they had not enough troops to deal with Italian advance in the west.

Further, Italians had dropped pamphlets in Gojjam on March 31st announcing their approaching arrival in that province which being practically denuded of troops might afford them an open road to Debra Markos whence they could threaten Addis Ababa.

Minister had no news from southern front or confirmation of reported Italian advance in Aussa towards Dessie.

Minister then went on to comment in dignified if bitter terms on ineffectiveness of League action both as regards their armistice proposals in lieu of extension of sanctions and as regards Italian use of gas. He said that since intensive Italian offensive which had followed on these proposals had prevented the Emperor from giving personal attention to League enquiry of March 23rd Abyssinian Government proposed to address a further appeal to the

¹ Belaten Guéta Herouy.

League to ascertain whether action more concrete than enquiry might be expected.²

He had informed the Emperor today of developments in the west but until result of fighting in the north were known he could not forecast the future. He was definitely depressed.

² Cf. Nos. 158 and 183.

No. 201

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received April 3, 11.35 a.m.)

No. 146 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2647/4/18]

BERLIN, April 3, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Press comment particularly that of *Berliner Tageblatt* shows total lack of any wish to understand the difficulty of the position created for His Majesty's Government by the German action.

German honour is most precious but no account is taken of obligation of Great Britain to maintain her's [*sic*] by fulfilling her engagements (see penultimate sentence of my telegram No. 99 of March 17th).²

¹ This telegram, No. 145 of April 3 from Berlin, quoted protests in the German press against General Staff conversations between England and France. The *Berliner Tageblatt* was reported as stating that 'the Locarno memorandum [No. 144] provided for General Staff conversations only if Germany returned an unsatisfactory reply'. In a minute of April 3 Mr. H. A. C. Rumbold, a Third Secretary in the Central Department, remarked that in making this statement the paper was 'lying unashamedly'. Mr. Wigram wrote: 'The worst of the whole business is the way the Germans lie—press and officials. R. F. Wigram. 3/4.'

² Should be March 15: see No. 105.

No. 202

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 53 Telegraphic [C 2645/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 3, 1936, 2.30 p.m.

Covering note and letters (my despatch No. 185)¹ relating to text of proposals of March 19th were exchanged with Belgian Ambassador² yesterday.

His Excellency told me that the Belgian Prime Minister thought that a meeting between the Locarno Powers might take place in Paris in the latter half of next week. I pointed out that the Friday of next week was Good Friday and I hardly saw how we could have a meeting at that time. The Ambassador said he thought Monsieur van Zeeland was probably only

¹ Not printed: cf. No. 199, note 8.

² Baron Cartier de Marchienne.

anxious to gain time and to avoid a meeting in the early part of next week. He did not anticipate any difficulty in securing Monsieur van Zeeland's agreement to postpone the meeting until after Easter. The Ambassador himself expressed the opinion that it was highly desirable to allow a little time to elapse before such a meeting took place.

I told the Ambassador that I was opposed to any meeting at all until at least we were clear as to our programme. If the intention was to invite a meeting of the Locarno Powers without Germany in order to take note of the breakdown of conciliation and to declare that the terms of the letter proposed in London had come into force, then I must tell the Ambassador at once that I should be opposed to any such course—which would certainly be wholly unacceptable to public opinion in this country.

Finally, he suggested in respect of staff conversations that they might be useful if they were begun with the Military Attachés. I replied that I thought this an attractive suggestion, for we were quite willing, as we had declared, that such conversations should take place and that there was nothing to be gained by holding them with too much flourish.

Repeated to Paris No. 107, Berlin No. 96, and Rome No. 118.

No. 203

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 129 Telegraphic [J 2809/45/1]

Immediate Very Confidential FOREIGN OFFICE, April 3, 1936, 6.10 p.m.

An Abyssinian Envoy, who had been specially sent from Paris for the purpose, called on me this afternoon to deliver a message from the Abyssinian Foreign Minister in Addis Ababa. Mr. Efrem Tewolde Medhen explained that the message which he had received made it plain that the Abyssinian Government viewed the military situation in that country with very grave anxiety. The army was tired as a result of its continuous bombardment and subjection to gas, and there was imminent danger of a complete collapse. In those circumstances he had been instructed by the Abyssinian Government to come from Paris and see me at once and ask what advice I could give to his Government. He was to telegraph his reply urgently.

Mr. Efrem added that the Emperor was still at the front, and that he had decided to die fighting. Efforts had been made to persuade him to withdraw, but this he had refused to do. I asked Mr. Efrem whether the Emperor approved of the message which was being sent to me. Mr. Efrem replied that he did not know. He imagined that the Emperor was at least aware of the fact that the message had been sent, though he could not be sure even of this. The message had actually proceeded from Ministers at Addis Ababa.¹

¹ In his telegram No. 131 to Addis Ababa, despatched at 6.30 p.m. on April 3, Mr. Eden said that he had now seen Mr. Efrem and had advised him to place himself at once

in touch with M. de Madariaga and to ask for an early meeting of the Committee of Thirteen. He understood that a possible date for such a meeting would be April 8. Mr. Efrem was returning to Paris that night to convey this advice to his Minister.

No. 204

Note by Sir R. Vansittart

[C 2733/4/18]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, April, 1936¹

The following is from a highly placed inside source in Germany.

'The German Government is determined to take the offensive as soon as rearmament is sufficiently advanced. The Nazi Party are bent on conquering Czechoslovakia and Roumania and annexing Austria. They hope for an alliance with Hungary and Yugoslavia with whom they would divide the territorial gains. They talk wildly of undermining and overthrowing the Soviet Government, establishing a Fascist Russian dictatorship in Moscow and forming a Russo-German alliance. To ensure success in these plans France and Britain must be prevented from interference. The most important immediate task for the Reichswehr is to complete a zone of fortifications along the frontiers facing France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Holland. These defence works have already been begun and now employ tens of thousands of Labour Corps and other workmen. The object is to prevent the advance of French armies into Germany and enable the German Air Force to operate from points as close up to the frontiers as possible. These fortifications will be like the Pyrenees and keep France isolated, like Spain, except for her Air Force which, if used, would bring quick reprisals. The Reichswehr and General Staff have no objection to these ambitious plans; in fact they are busy working them out, provided the army is not launched against ridiculous odds or pushed into some ill-planned adventure to save the face of the Government. They are all for the fortifications and a free hand in the east and south east, but insist upon a further period to complete rearmament and perfect their organisation. Hitler and Goering are pressing for more speed. Goering is itching for a scrap. The Reichswehr Generals, though fully approving the principle of reoccupying the demilitarized zone, opposed this step because they felt the method unsound and likely to create enemies unnecessarily. It was also too early for the offensive and would speed up rearming in other countries. Internal political conditions caused Hitler to overrule these objections. The Generals have warned Hitler that in no circumstances can the army fight in 1936. It has hardly more than six weeks' ammunition. The fortifications on the west must first be completed, which will not be till sometime in 1937. Till then all German war threats

¹ The note is undated. A minute on the filed copy reads: 'Seen by S. of S. O. C. H. 3/iv.' Mr. O. C. Harvey was Private Secretary to Mr. Eden.

would be mere bluff unless Great Britain, France and Italy were seriously involved in the Abyssinian imbroglio.

The Reichswehr is suspicious of Goering seeking an adventure with his Air Force. Blomberg has issued a secret order to the ex-Reichswehr officers in the Air Force that any orders about mobilisation or similar vital questions are only to be carried out if counter-signed by General Wever (Blomberg's watchdog in the Air Force). Such orders signed only by Goering or Milch² would not be valid and would not be executed.

The German Government and its military chiefs are tending more and more to the conviction that no military action on the part of Great Britain need be feared during the execution of Germany's programme in east and south east Europe, and that quick action and shock tactics pay best. They base this on repeated statements by the British Government that it would avoid war, and on the attitude of the British public, particularly towards a war that did not particularly threaten the Low Countries or the Channel ports.'

N.B. Lt.-Generals Milch and Wever are the senior generals in the Air Ministry. The former handles technical supplies and production. He used to be a police officer and then became Managing Director of the Luft-Hansa till Goering took him over. Wever is an old Reichswehr officer, transferred with many others to the Air Force, and is believed to be responsible for tactics, planning, etc.

² State Secretary in the Reich Air Ministry.

No. 205

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 420 [C 2657/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 3, 1936*

Sir,

Herr von Ribbentrop asked to see me urgently this morning when he stated that he had been anxious to see me before I made any statement in the House of Commons.¹ He had had two communications with Berlin yesterday, I gathered with the Chancellor himself. Herr von Ribbentrop remarked that he understood from me yesterday that the decision had already been taken that Staff conversations should begin with the French and Belgians. He had been confirmed in this by the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons yesterday.² Nonetheless he had come to me even at this eleventh hour to make an urgent representation that we should even now

¹ Cf. No. 198, note 3.

² In the course of an answer to a parliamentary question, Mr. Baldwin said: 'His Majesty's Government cannot agree to the postponement of these conversations, which they regard as an essential element in the restoration of confidence which is necessary for the success of these negotiations.' See 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 2121-2.

reconsider our attitude and not enter into these staff conversations. He would not conceal from me, after his conversations with Berlin yesterday, that these conversations were looked upon there as being a most retrograde step. It was quite inconceivable to the German Government that they should be necessary and in their view they were most undesirable at this time and they feared that if they were entered into at once they would greatly prejudice the chances of negotiation.

2. I replied that I had explained yesterday at some length, as also at previous interviews that I had been privileged to have with him, the reasons which had actuated His Majesty's Government in the decision which they had taken. I could only repeat that that decision had been taken and that it could not be varied. I was sorry that the German Government should regard this step as retrograde, but I must point out in reply that we regarded the uni-lateral denunciation of a Treaty as retrograde. It was as a result of a situation thus created by the German Government that we were endeavouring to create conditions of confidence which would make negotiation possible. These Staff conversations were our contribution to this end. Since the German Government had only recently re-affirmed that they had no intention to attack France and Belgium, I could not understand why they should be so perturbed at the conversations which could only have any effect in the event of an unprovoked aggression by Germany upon France or Belgium. Herr von Ribbentrop stated that he was sorry to hear that I could not modify the attitude which I had previously taken up and he reiterated his fears as to the effect of my statement upon German opinion.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

No. 206

Letter from Mr. Law to Mr. Sargent

[C 2724/4/18]

Extract

April 3, 1936

My dear Moley,

Germany. The City as a whole is no longer pro-German. As I told you in my last letter¹ the change of feeling dates from the Secretary of State's speech in the House on the 26th.² The anti-French feeling is still slumbering and would awake into a blaze if the French Government were to reject the German proposals out of hand and to break off further conversations. But the Staff talks are now accepted by nearly all as inevitable and by quite a few as beneficial. There is more distrust of Germany's immediate motives and widespread distrust of her future policy. This feeling causes universal recognition of the need of pressing on as rapidly as possible with our own rearmament.

¹ No. 186.

² Cf. No. 163, note 4.

On the German proposals themselves there is a gradation of feeling dependent largely on the extent to which each person has studied them. Those who have given time and thought see them as useless and ludicrous as they now stand. Others who have swallowed newspaper summaries charitably describe them as the usual over-emphasized preliminaries to driving a bargain. But all consider that they open the way to lengthy negotiations from which something useful may emerge. Although, as I said above, the City is no longer pro-German in the sense in which it previously was (that is, their sympathies are no longer with Germany), it must be admitted that the Germans have scored the first round here. For I find scarcely anyone who is prepared to sacrifice the chance of further negotiation in order to extract from Germany a more substantial gesture of contrition.

There is then a unanimous desire that negotiations should go on, preferably in private and without public speeches or statements. People are a little uneasy and very bored. They don't want to think about the question until the negotiations have reached a point where complete agreement or equally complete disagreement is in sight.

To sum up, feeling in the City has now become very similar to that which I believe to exist in the country at large. People of intelligence and education are deeply distrustful of Germany and not entirely unsympathetic to France. The lower middle class and the very young, who aspire to an appearance of knowledge and independence of thought which they do not possess, are violently anti-French and ridicule the idea of the sanctity of treaties. The lower classes do not think. They just remember the war and they believe that the Huns will always be Huns. Their attitude is not dissimilar from the views expressed in the Covering Letter to the reply to the German objections to the draft Peace Treaty of June 16th., 1919, the fine invective of which I believe we owe largely to a young man then called Phillip [*sic*] Kerr!³

Yours ever,
NIGEL

³ i.e. Lord Lothian.

No. 207

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 108 Telegraphic [J 2646/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 4, 1936, 2.53 p.m.*

Sir E. Drummond's telegram No. 189.¹

Please take an early opportunity to let French Government know that while His Majesty's Government are anxious to accelerate Señor Madariaga's conciliation efforts and consider that for this purpose an early meeting of the Committee of Thirteen is highly desirable, they remain convinced that the

¹ No. 182.

most important consideration at the present moment and with a view to securing early termination of hostilities is that utmost possible pressure should be brought to bear upon Italian Government satisfactorily to implement their acceptance of the Committee of Thirteen's invitation and to renounce any idea of excluding the League from the negotiations and of dictating terms to Ethiopia.²

You should add that the wholesale use of poison gas by the Italian forces, which is now amply substantiated, has, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, introduced a new element which at one and the same time makes the continuance of the war more intolerable while obviating any prospect of associating Italy with League assistance to Abyssinia. It will, in His Majesty's Government's view, be one of the primary duties of the Committee of Thirteen at its next meeting sharply to condemn Italy's violation of The Hague Convention and the Geneva Protocol.³

² The state of the Italo-Ethiopian negotiations was further discussed by the Cabinet on April 6 in anticipation of the debate in the House of Commons on the same afternoon. It was suggested that it would not be desirable to state that Abyssinia was in a desperate situation as this would encourage Italy and weaken the prospects of conciliation. The Cabinet agreed that Mr. Eden should be authorized in the debate to state that 'largely on British initiative, the League of Nations Committee of Thirteen was to meet at Geneva on Wednesday, 8th April; That if no success were achieved in the direction of conciliation the Committee of Eighteen would probably be summoned; That we, as a nation, were prepared to take part in any extension of sanctions which other nations were prepared jointly to apply'. He might add that the League, owing to its incompleteness, was unable 'to enforce economic sanctions that would produce any early effect'.

³ At the Cabinet meeting on April 6 Mr. Eden was authorized to tell the House of Commons that it was agreed that he should propose an impartial enquiry through the League of Nations into the subject of gas warfare, since this was a question that affected every nation in the world. For Mr. Eden's speech in the House of Commons on April 6 see 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 2503-11.

No. 208

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 634 [C 2707/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 4, 1936*

Sir,

I asked M. Cambon¹ to call upon me this morning in connection with a telephone message from M. Flandin, which he had communicated to the Foreign Office late last night, asking whether I would be prepared to attend a meeting of the Locarno Powers on Wednesday, April 8th, either in Paris or Brussels.

2. I reminded M. Cambon of the interview that I had previously had with M. Corbin before the latter's departure for Paris.² I had then made it clear to His Excellency that I did not favour an early meeting of the Locarno

¹ Counsellor at the French Embassy in London.

² See No. 199.

Powers and that indeed I was opposed to a meeting at all unless we were very clear in advance as to the result which we hoped to attain. If, for instance, it were in the mind of the French Government to arrange for a meeting in order that we might take note of the breakdown of conciliation and that as a consequence the Letter had come into force, then I must make it quite clear to him that it would be impossible for us to agree to any such course. In view of the language which I had used to M. Corbin, I had anticipated that, if M. Flandin still desired a meeting, he would tell me of the purpose for which it should be held, and I had received no such information. Had M. Cambon any?

3. M. Cambon replied that he had received no message from Paris beyond that which he had sent to me. He knew that M. Corbin had faithfully reported what I had said to him, for he had seen his telegrams to Paris and they were in the terms which I had just used to M. Cambon. He could only suppose that, after repeating my views to M. Flandin, the latter had decided to send this message. This explanation, I reminded the Counsellor of the French Embassy, left me still in the dark as to the purpose of the meeting which M. Flandin desired.

4. In the meanwhile, there had been one new development. I understood that M. de Madariaga wished to summon a meeting of the Committee of Thirteen for Wednesday³ or Thursday of next week. Personally I thought that this was a necessary step to take in view of the development of events in Abyssinia and the delay in making any progress with conciliation. I was personally prepared to attend the Committee. If M. Flandin were also to attend and M. van Zeeland would come too, then there could be no reason why we should not have an exchange of views at Geneva. I was personally prepared for such an exchange on the understanding that it would be exploratory and that there would be no question of our being asked to sign any fresh set of documents. M. Cambon said that he fully understood the position, and that he was personally grateful to me for making this counter-offer which he would at once report to Paris. M. Cambon indicated that the French Government had received some information as to a possible meeting of the Committee of Thirteen and that M. Flandin did not take at all kindly to the idea. I gathered that in the view of the French Foreign Minister such a meeting was scarcely necessary at the present juncture.⁴

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

³ April 8.

⁴ Sir R. Vansittart noted on April 6 that M. Corbin 'called on me today to announce that his Government agreed to the proposal of the Secretary of State that the meeting of the Locarno Powers should take place at Geneva this week. He added that he did not think that M. van Zeeland would be able to be in Geneva until Thursday afternoon [April 9].'

No. 209

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 125 Telegraphic [J 1013/45/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 5, 1936, 8 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 610¹ and 118 (Saving)² of last year.

I should be glad if you would at once recall to Italian Government your representations and say that in view of appearance of Italian aircraft over Addis Ababa, His Majesty's Government consider it both urgent and essential to remind Italian Government of their undertaking that there will be no bombing of this open town.

You should act immediately, but you should endeavour to persuade your colleagues who took part in previous *démarches* to take similar action.

Repeated to Addis Ababa No. 134, Paris No. 109, Brussels No. 55, Berlin No. 99, Angora No. 73, Washington No. 111, Athens No. 56, Cairo No. 174.³

¹ Volume XV, No. 75.

² See *ibid.*, note 5.

³ Telegrams were despatched, also on April 5 at 8 p.m., to Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Angora, Washington, Athens, and Cairo, referring to the above telegram and instructing each representative to urge the government to which he was accredited to take similar action.

No. 210

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received April 7, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 213 Telegraphic [J 2874/84/1]

ROME, *April 6, 1936, 9.30 p.m.*

Signor Suvich told me this morning that Baron Aloisi¹ was leaving Rome tonight in order to participate in Geneva meeting of Locarno Powers. Italian Government did not much like transference of meeting to Geneva but had nevertheless concurred.

There was also to be a meeting at Geneva of Committee of 13 but Italy of course was not represented. As I knew Señor de Mad[a]riaga had written asking Italian Government to send a representative to Geneva to get into touch with him. Italian Government had replied that they would be willing to do so immediately after Easter but had suggested that it would be preferable if Señor de Mad[a]riaga could himself come to Rome and take soundings with responsible people here. Señor de Mad[a]riaga had answered in effect that he could not do so without authority of Committee of 13. What Signor Suvich enquired was Committee now going to do? Had it been summoned simply to give Señor de Mad[a]riaga authority to visit Rome? I disclaimed knowledge of reasons for the meeting. His Excellency repeated again that Italy was not a member of the Committee of 13 and

¹ *Chef de cabinet* in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Italian delegate to the League of Nations.

seemed rather to emphasize that Baron Aloisi therefore had nothing to do with convocation of that Committee.

Repeated to Geneva.

No. 211

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received April 7, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 214 Telegraphic [J 2884/84/1]

ROME, April 7,¹ 1935, 12.25 a.m.

Your telegram No. 108² to Paris.

Personal.

I fear there is little hope that Signor Mussolini will agree today to any peace proposals on the lines of those of the Committee of Five or of Hoare-Laval plan. He seems to hold all the military cards in his hand and their value increases weekly. If this is so the time factor becomes more and more important. If the position is indeed as reported by Abyssinian envoy in the first paragraph of your telegram to Addis Ababa No. 129³ is there not a danger that pending Geneva negotiations to which as I have indicated I can hardly foresee a satisfactory issue, the continued military operations will force the Abyssinians to accept peace on almost any terms, if indeed the Emperor is still in a position to negotiate? Should he disappear may not the position become even worse? If on the other hand the Emperor asked at once for direct negotiations it is possible that Signor Mussolini might still be comparatively generous. The deduction is of course highly unpalatable but I feel this aspect deserves consideration.

Enthusiasm of the people in this country is increasing since they believe ultimate victory is within sight. Feeling seems again running high against us but here, I think, Signor Mussolini himself may be considered as a restraining influence.

Repeated to Geneva.

¹ The filed copy of this telegram gives the date of despatch, evidently in error, as April 6.

² No. 207.

³ No. 203.

No. 212

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received April 8, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 219 Telegraphic [J 2934/84/1]

ROME, April 7, 1936, 11.30 p.m.

My French colleague returned from Paris yesterday and I saw him this evening. Since his return he had informed Signor Suvich that a speedy cessation of hostilities and an early conclusion of peace between Italy and

Abyssinia was necessary as this would permit cessation of sanctions simultaneously with that of hostilities. This declaration did not seem to please Signor Suvich who the Ambassador thought had probably hoped that French Government would no longer agree to the continuation of sanctions.

French Ambassador then developed to me at considerable length his theory that direct negotiations between the Emperor and the Italian Government were essential, as negotiations conducted through the League would involve much loss of time; moreover Italians might endeavour to spin them out for military reasons. Italian terms increased of course with every military victory and therefore in his view it was in the interests of the Emperor himself to come to terms as quickly as possible. It was also in British interests since he believed that ample Italian participation in Locarno conversations would be of great advantage to us; Italy would be able to bring additional and important weight to bear on Germany.¹

Repeated to Geneva and Paris.

¹ Mr. G. H. Thompson remarked in a minute of April 8: 'I imagine that M. Flandin has been saying exactly the same thing to the Secretary of State in Geneva. It is exactly the line the French were expected to take.' Mr. Eden left London for Geneva on the afternoon of April 7 to attend the meeting of the Locarno Powers on April 8.

No. 213

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received April 8, noon)

No. 76 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2788/4/18]

BERLIN, April 7, 1936

I hear privately that approaching General Staff conversations¹ have intensified feeling of pessimism in responsible circles in the army, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and among business men. Even in the Nazi party itself doubts are being entertained for the first time about wisdom of Herr Hitler's sudden decision to denounce Locarno. The chief blame is placed on Herr von Ribbentrop's shoulders. It is asserted that before his return to London on March 31st he gave Department of the Interior to understand that he could stave off Staff conversations. He is also said to have assured the Chancellor in the first instance that offer of return to the League would sweep English public opinion off its feet and compel the Government to disregard breach of Locarno. There is considerable *Schadenfreude* in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the . . .² of new diplomacy particularly as Herr von Bülow was unaware of German proposal to return to the League until he read final draft of Chancellor's memorandum. In addition the Wilhelmstrasse is disturbed by Polish attitude which is definitely less amenable than a month ago. Herr Hitler himself is well aware of critical attitude of military and official circles but adheres to his view that he was forced to act as he did.

¹ Cf. No. 205.

² The text was here uncertain.

Otherwise French Government would have obtained from the British Government early in March an assurance that Italy's defection would not invalidate Locarno and that the British Government would regard the occupation of the Rhineland as a deliberate violation calling for immediate steps. Any such declaration would have blocked the way for restoration of German sovereignty for a fresh term of years. It was idle to imagine that France would ever agree by negotiation to fortification of the Rhineland zone. Even if she were prepared, her allies, especially Russia, would veto such an idea. He (Herr Hitler) only acted at the eleventh hour to safeguard Germany's future freedom of movement in years to come. The army however fears Italian victory in Abyssinia will soon lead to reconciliation between Italy and England and France and a reformation of the Stresa front.

Repeated to Geneva No. 5 Saving.

No. 214

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received April 8, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 77 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2754/97/18]

BERLIN, April 7, 1936

Dr. Goebbels' newspaper, the 'Angriff', under the heading 'Quiet discussion of the German Colonial Question' publishes a telegram from its London correspondent, which contains the following passage.

'Return of the Mandates

In addition to Eden's remarks in yesterday's debate¹ Neville Chamberlain's statement about the return of the mandated territories to Germany² has aroused great attention. This statement, although very tortuous, has, it is generally recognised, not only not denied the possibility of a return of the mandated territories but let it be pretty clearly seen that it is a question of the near future. In any case the statement was very different to former governmental declarations on this subject in the House of Commons in which the mandated territories were designated as an inalienable part of

¹ Cf. No. 207, note 3. Mr. Eden's speech also dealt with Anglo-German relations.

² In reply, later in the debate, to a question by Mr. Churchill as to 'the attitude of the Government about Colonies and mandated territories' Mr. Chamberlain referred to the procedure whereby a transfer of a mandated territory could be effected, and concluded: 'As to what might happen in the future, I think it would be unreasonable to ask me to predict the action of future Governments, but this I will say at any rate. Mandates are not held by this country alone. I cannot conceive that any Government would even discuss the question of the transfer of its own mandate quite irrespective of what will happen to the mandates held by other Governments.' He went on to refer to British obligations 'to the people who inhabit these territories' and concluded: 'we would not think of surrendering those obligations or handing those territories over to any other Power, even for the sake of obtaining that general peaceful settlement which all of us so much desire, unless we were satisfied that the interests of all sections of the populations inhabiting those territories were fully safeguarded' (310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 2556-8).

the British Empire. This attitude appears to have been abandoned, and it only remains to state that the possibility of a return of the mandates will be accepted by public opinion, if not with enthusiasm, at least calmly. Not a single newspaper sees fit today to pronounce against Chamberlain's declaration, whereas a few months ago such a statement would have evoked an artificial storm of indignation in certain conservative newspapers.'

Other London correspondents also give prominence to Mr. Chamberlain's remarks.

Copied to Geneva No. 6 Saving.

No. 215

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Sargent

[C 2920/159/18]

BERLIN, April 7, 1936

My dear Sargent,

Do great minds think alike, or is it a coincidence that you should have asked in your letter C 2579/4/18¹ of April 2nd for a memorandum, showing the discrepancies between Hitler's recent offers and 'Mein Kampf'? I understand that Kennedy² of the 'Times' has written an article on this subject which he hopes will be published.

I am afraid that if we prepare a memorandum, it will not be a short one. There are 781 pages of 'Mein Kampf' and a very large number of these could be described as being in contradiction with Hitler's recent offers. However, if you will be so good as to send us a copy of the English translation (which we do not possess), we will see what we can do. At the same time I must warn you that I think it will be unwise to attach much importance to the memorandum. If you want to use it in debate, the Germans will always answer, as Blomberg did to me, that it is unfair to take the foreign affairs passages of 'Mein Kampf' literally and that reference should be made to Hitler's present-day speeches for information as to his present ideas on foreign policy. If, on the other hand, you wish to form a judgment as to the sincerity of Hitler's recent offers, 'Mein Kampf' is also dangerous. The book doubtless represents in the main Hitler's ideas and his ideals. But, as he has himself said, it is sometimes necessary to bow to the inevitable and deviate from one's course. The Polish Agreement is a case in point. It is therefore possible that Hitler, whilst seeking ultimately the goal described in 'Mein Kampf', is genuinely prepared to agree to a twenty-five year truce. It may also be that he is insincere in offering this truce, but it would be dangerous to rely on 'Mein Kampf' to decide the point.³

¹ Not printed.

² Mr. A. L. Kennedy was Assistant Foreign Editor of *The Times*.

³ In a minute of April 17 Mr. C. J. W. Torr remarked that 'Sir E. Phipps does not seem very keen on undertaking the job'. The Central Department sent a copy of the

My Czechoslovak colleague tells me that the other night after dinner at Goering's he saw a book in a priceless sixteenth century cover. When he took it up Goering exclaimed 'that is my bible'. Mastny then looked inside and found 'Mein Kampf'. He thereupon remarked that it was interesting to hear Hermann Goering so describe this book, at which his host gave signs of embarrassment, but fixed a near date for another meeting and said he would explain his meaning. Two days later, when Mastny went to see him, Goering pretended that 'Mein Kampf' was only his bible for internal and not external affairs! The fact is the Germans want to do that almost impossible thing (even with old English ladies and Bishops), viz., to deceive *everybody* all the time. After all, even a Vernon Bartlett⁴ (with two ts) *may* turn!

Of more interest perhaps is what is actually going on to-day in Germany. You will have noticed that we reported Dr. Goebbels as having sneered at the League of Nations during the election campaign; and we are sending you by this bag a despatch⁵ which shows that the youth are being taught to regard Alsace-Lorraine as *terra irredenta*.

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

English translation of *Mein Kampf* to the Embassy in Berlin and made its own collection of extracts in English translation from the German edition of *Mein Kampf*: this collection was forwarded to Sir E. Phipps on April 25, with a covering letter, not preserved in the Foreign Office archives. Replying in a letter to Mr. Wigram of April 27, Mr. I. Kirkpatrick observed that the 'English edition which I had never seen before is the most miserable précis of the German version and in many places does not purport to be a translation. Its bulk is barely 25% of the original.' The Central Department's translation was polished up by the Embassy, and the revised version of the document was circulated as Confidential Print dated May 7, 1936 (C 3455/159/18) with the heading: 'A Translation of some of the more important Passages of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925 German Edition), prepared by His Majesty's Embassy, Berlin, and the Central Department, Foreign Office.'

⁴ See No. 15, note 2.

⁵ Not printed.

No. 216

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office (Received April 8, 11.20 a.m.)

No. 167 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 2941/45/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, April 8, 1936

Your telegram No. 133.¹

(1) The most urgent and tangible help would consist in elimination of gas from Italian armoury. British official press report of March 31st describing incredulity manifested in Parliament and the press on this subject and

¹ This Foreign Office telegram of April 4, after referring to Sir S. Barton's report in his telegram No. 74 of February 24 concerning the situation in Ethiopia, asked whether he had, in the light of developments since that date, 'any suggestions to offer as to possible material help for Abyssinia of other than financial nature'.

suggesting excuses for Italian attacks on Red Cross etc. was received here with pained amazement.² The whole atmosphere here is poisoned both literally and metaphorically by this worst example of Italian frightfulness and an official statement of British view would do something to reduce prevailing bitterness. Quite apart from questions of international obligations continuous use of gas complicates enormously the problem of security for foreigners in this country while even the French express great apprehension at its future reactions for colonial Powers.

(2) Next in immediate importance would be an official statement of British view regarding report widely circulated by the press early in March that Italy must be placated at all costs in the interests of European peace. In my telegram No. 30 of February 5th, 1935,³ I reported effect here of press reports that European peace had been purchased at the cost of Ethiopia by Franco-Italian Agreement of January 7th, 1935.⁴ Subsequent effect of this Agreement on the attitude of Council of the League has hardly corresponded to standard set up in Foreign Office telegram No. 44 of February 9th 1935⁵ to me as far as France is concerned, and effect of this second report in the same direction can therefore be seen here, the maintenance of sanctions offers the only hope of salving the wreck for the League.

(3) The question has been put to me recently by one of the most intelligent members of the Government here as to whether there was anything to prevent Ethiopian appeal to the League, if necessary even after a peace of sacrifice, to be placed under the tutelage of England for a term of years. This is of course but another form of the idea which has consistently been advocated by the Emperor for the past five years. It is easy to reply by stressing the international embarrassments inherent in any such proposal, but now that the crisis has to be faced the very persistence with which the idea is put forward confirms me in my conviction that an acceptance by us of some responsibility in some form for Ethiopia's future will prove an essential factor in any peace based on anything short of the disappearance of Ethiopia.

(4) I am conscious that none of the above may correspond to the description of 'material help' in the literal sense of the word 'material'; but in the latter sense it is difficult to suggest anything which would not involve financial considerations. Many foreign employees of the Abyssinian Government have recently been given notice because there is no money for their salaries.

Arms are urgently needed and memory of embargo is more than ever bitter, but unless our Disposals Board were inclined to help the financial difficulty remains.⁶

² Cf. *The Times*, March 31, 1936, pp. 16 and 17.

³ Volume XIV, No. 150; this telegram was in fact dated February 6.

⁴ See *ibid.*, No. 90, note 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 152.

⁶ Comments by Sir L. Oliphant and Sir R. Vansittart on this telegram included the following: 'It is pathetic how the Emperor would wish us to take over his country: and for him a thousand pities that it must be ruled out. L. O. 8 Apr.' 'I think that some measure or

measures under 4 ought to be considered at Geneva rather than the hopeless prospect of an extension of sanctions. I had already expressed this view to the S. of S. before he started . . . R. V. Apr. 9.'

No. 217

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Foreign Office (Received April 8, 12.30 p.m.)

No. 194 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2804/4/18]

PARIS, April 8, 1936

My telegram No. 191.¹

Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning communicated to me copies of declaration and memorandum which have been forwarded to you by air bag under cover of my despatch No. 467 of today's date.²

I understand that while the declaration is addressed to no Power in particular, the memorandum should be regarded as more particularly though not specifically addressed to His Majesty's Government.

The documents were communicated by M. Flandin to the Secretary of State on the train last night before they had been given to the representative of any other Power. They are being officially communicated to the Belgian and Italian representatives in Paris this morning and will be handed later today to representatives of the Little Entente, Spain, Poland and the Soviet Union. They were given to the Press at midday.³

The declaration and memorandum are not, however, being communicated to the German Government on the ground that the recent German proposals were not communicated to the French Government.⁴

¹ This telegram of April 7 said that the Quai d'Orsay persisted in maintaining an attitude of strictest reserve as regards both the procedure to be adopted at the forthcoming meeting of the Locarno powers and the contents of the document replying to the German memorandum of March 31 (No. 193, note 2), the text of which was finally approved by the Council of Ministers on the night of April 6.

² Not printed: see Introductory Note to this Chapter.

³ Published in *The Times* of April 9, 1936, pp. 15-16.

⁴ On another copy of this telegram below the last paragraph a note by Mr. Eden (undated) reads: 'Do we have to act Post Office again?' A Foreign Office telegram of April 16, No. 18 Saving to Sir E. Phipps, said that there would 'seem to be no harm in our communicating the French plan officially to the German Government, and indeed it seems possible that, if this is not done, the German Government may eventually raise difficulties on the ground that this plan has never been communicated to them officially'. Cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, 'Editors' Note', pp. 402-3.

*Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office (Received April 8, 2 p.m.)
No. 168 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 2950/84/1]*

Immediate Very Confidential

ADDIS ABABA, April 8, 1936

In the course of conversation on the situation yesterday¹ Minister for Foreign Affairs² informed me in strict confidence of the terms of Italian peace proposal which had been conveyed to the Emperor last month by Afe Work, late Chargé d'Affaires in Rome, who received it at Jibuti about the time of his wife's return from Italy at the end of February.³

1. Cession of Tigre with the exception of Axum.
2. Cession of Ogaden up to the frontier of Harrar and Jijiga.
3. Cession of Borana up to Nuggeli.
4. Economic concessions.
5. All advisers to be Italian.
6. Cession of a corridor along the existing British and French frontiers to ensure that Ethiopia should march only with Italian territory.

The Emperor's reply to the above had been a flat refusal.

This gave me the opportunity to enquire whether the Minister could give me any idea of what terms his Government would be willing to consider. The Minister replied that before the outbreak of war Council of Ministers had agreed that the following might be considered.

1. Cession of Eastern Tigre from Adowa including Agame and Danakil country up to the hinterland of Assab.
2. Cession of Ogaden up to Daggahbur.
3. Cession of a small portion of Bale.
4. Economic concessions to Italians as well as to others.
5. Italians as well as other advisers, but on no account any monopoly for Italy of concessions or advisers.

I made no comment but expressed my thanks for the information which I said would be useful for my Government.⁴

¹ i.e. April 6; this telegram was drafted on April 7.

² Belaten Guéta Herouy.

³ See No. 103, note 1.

⁴ Mr. Thompson commented: '... It is interesting to note that the concessions which we now learn the Ethiopian Council of Ministers were prepared, prior to the outbreak of war, to make to Italy approximate very closely to the much-abused Hoare-Laval proposals of last December. G. H. Thompson. 8th April, 1936.'

*Foreign Office to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)**No. 112¹ Telegraphic [C 2748/4/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 8, 1936, 7.50 p.m.*

The Cabinet this morning approved a proposal that the General Staff conversations between the representatives of the Belgian, French and United Kingdom General Staffs should open in London on Wednesday, April 15th. You should enquire by whom the French General Staffs would be represented.

The present conversations will be confined to the subject set forth in Section III of the Text of Proposals of March 19th,² viz. 'to arranging the technical conditions in which the obligations which are binding upon them (i.e. Belgium, France and the United Kingdom) should be carried out in case of unprovoked aggression'. In these circumstances the matters for discussion will be an exchange of information between the Staffs (1) as to the defence forces and defences which, subject to the decision of the respective Governments concerned, would be available in the event of the contingency referred to in Section III of the Text of the Proposals; and (2) regarding ports, and other facilities.

Owing to the limited nature of the conversations as defined above, His Majesty's Government do not propose that the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staffs should participate in these conversations; and the United Kingdom Staffs will be represented by officers of the appropriate Directorates in the Service Departments concerned. You should say that in these circumstances His Majesty's Government wonder whether the French Government will not prefer to be represented in the first instance at any rate by their Service Attachés in London.³

Personal and Confidential. Should the French Government state that they consider that representation of their Staffs by the Service Attachés would be insufficient, you should suggest that they should be represented on similar lines to those on which His Majesty's Government were represented at the Staff conversations in Paris concerning the Mediterranean in December last,⁴ i.e. by the Service Attachés, accompanied by one or two officers of the appropriate Directorates in the Service Departments.

¹ Addressed *mutatis mutandis* to Brussels, telegram No. 57.

² No. 144.

³ These instructions were in accordance with the conclusions of a meeting of the C.I.D. on April 3 (cf. No. 185, note 4), at which the memorandum 1224-B (No. 194) was considered. The conclusions, which were accepted by the Cabinet, said explicitly that the 'question whether British naval, military or air forces should be increased is a political question outside the Staff Conversations'.

⁴ See Volume XV, Appendix II.

Record by Sir R. Vansittart of a conversation with M. Masaryk¹

[R 2128/32/12]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1936

The Czechoslovak Minister came to see me today prior to returning to his country for a short holiday at Easter.

I said that I wished to speak of the Czech handling of the Sudeten-Deutsche. I thought his Government was giving most unwise hostages to fortune. The German Government had exploited the vein of grievances most profitably in the past, and so long as any opportunity was afforded to them they would continue to do so in the future. Already this dangerous tendency was apparent in the degree in which it had been sought to exploit the alleged existence of Russian aerodromes in Czechoslovakia.² I thought the Czechoslovak Government would be far wiser to deprive the Germans of any semblance of grievance which would otherwise be certainly turned to ill account. Moreover by so doing they would consolidate their own position at home, since there was ground for believing that the Sudetendeutsche could be conciliated.

M. Masaryk asked if he could give this as a personal message from me to M. Benes. I replied that he certainly could do so, and that I was really perturbed at this gratuitous provision of grievances when I thought the right policy for Czechoslovakia should lie in exactly the opposite direction. It was, in fact, I said, more likely that the German hand could be shaken if all its former trumps had been effectively drawn. In the alternative event, the hand would at least be instructively exposed.³

R. V.

¹ This conversation followed a series of telegrams and despatches from Prague concerning the policy of the Czech Government towards the Sudeten German minority in Czechoslovakia. In his despatch No. 58 of March 3, which enclosed the text of the controversial 'Machnik Decree', issued on January 28 by the Czech Ministry of National Defence, discriminating against non-Czech workers, Mr. Hadow deplored the harsh treatment suffered by the Sudeten Germans and warned that continued unrest could have serious international consequences. He advocated an Anglo-French protest to the Czech Government, but although Foreign Office views were sympathetic to the cause of Konrad Henlein's *Sudetendeutsche Partei* it was felt that such an approach to the French would only provoke charges of pandering to Nazi propaganda. In a minute of March 18 Sir R. Vansittart suggested that he should speak to M. Masaryk, Czech Minister in London, on the subject, and Mr. Eden minuted his agreement on March 22.

² Cf. Nos. 87, 89, and 93.

³ This Record formed telegram No. 47 of April 11 to Prague. In despatch No. 107 of May 23 Sir J. Addison reported that M. Masaryk had passed on Sir R. Vansittart's warning to President Benes, who, however, was too preoccupied with the international situation to pay it much heed. The question continued to worry the Foreign Office, where the policy of the Czech Government was generally condemned. Evidence of Henlein's involvement with the German Nazi party does not seem to have been considered, although in a letter of June 11 to Mr. Hadow Mr. O'Malley said that 'our information about what may be going on behind the scenes in the Henlein party is less than complete' and asked for any details

he could discover on the subject. The Sudeten Germans' appeal to the League against the Machnik Decree (see note 1 above) led to further consideration in the Foreign Office of what action His Majesty's Government could take, but on August 4 Mr. Eden concluded the discussion by agreeing with a minute of July 21 by Mr. Sargent that 'if we assume no commitments we must equally offer no advice' and stated that no further action could be taken until the League met in October to consider the Sudeten appeal. International aspects of the Sudeten question before 1938 are dealt with in B. Celovsky, *Das Münchener Abkommen 1938* (Stuttgart, 1958), Chapters II and III, R. Luza, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans* (New York, 1964), Chapters 3 and 4, and J. W. Brügel, *Tschechen und Deutschen 1918-1938* (Munich, 1967), Chapters 12 and 13.

No. 221

Record of Anglo-French conversation concerning the Italo-Ethiopian conflict held at the Hôtel des Bergues, Geneva, on April 8, 1936, at 2.30 p.m.¹

[J 3043/84/1]

PRESENT: *Great Britain:* Mr. Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; Mr. Strang, Foreign Office.

France: M. Flandin, Minister for Foreign Affairs; M. Paul-Boncour, Minister of State; M. René Massigli, Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

M. FLANDIN asked Mr. Eden what he thought the aim of the present meeting of the Committee of Thirteen ought to be.

MR. EDEN said that he was greatly preoccupied by the present situation. Five weeks ago the Committee of Eighteen had suspended its work in order that a new attempt at conciliation might be made.² This attempt had not been crowned with success. On the contrary, the Italians had intensified their campaign and accompanied it with new horrors. It was not tolerable for the Committee to continue to say that conciliation should go on, while conciliation was not producing any results. Ought not the Committee to agree that conciliation should bring some definite result, such as the cessation of hostilities? If once an armistice were arranged, conciliation might go on as long as the parties liked. If no such definite result were reached, the Committee of Eighteen must meet in order to decide what to do.

M. FLANDIN agreed that an attempt ought to be made to secure the cessation of hostilities. What worried him, however, was that it was rather the fault of the Committee of Thirteen if negotiations had not been started more quickly. The appeal to both parties had been made on the 2nd March:³ the Italian reply had been received on the 6th or 7th. Then the Rhineland affair had intervened. It was not till March 27th that the Chairman had addressed

¹ This Record was transmitted to the Foreign Office in Geneva despatch No. 30 of April 10.

² Cf. No. 30.

³ See No. 13.

a further communication to the Italian Government.⁴ This communication had been received in Rome on the 1st April and the reply had been sent on the following day. It was hardly possible to blame the Italian Government for delay.

The two parties had only been asked to negotiate, not to stop fighting or to conclude an armistice. An armistice was not within the framework of the Committee's resolution of March 2nd.⁵

He thought the best procedure would be for M. de Madariaga and the Secretary-General to see the Italian representative after Easter, as suggested by the Italian Government.

MR. EDEN observed that Baron Aloisi would be in Geneva that same day.

M. FLANDIN said that in that event the Chairman and the Secretary-General might meet him in Geneva at once. They ought to see both the Italian and the Abyssinian representatives in the presence of each other. They would listen to what the two parties had to say and then report to the Committee of Thirteen.

MR. EDEN said that in all frankness he ought to say that in his view the League of Nations had lost greatly in prestige in many countries during the last few weeks. A despairing message had now been received from the Abyssinian Government.⁶ Was the Committee to do no more than suggest that M. de Madariaga should see the Italian representative, and thus give the Italian Government an opportunity for further delay [?] Surely the right thing was for M. de Madariaga to try within the next few days to get the parties to agree to an armistice, failing which the Committee of Eighteen should meet. If when it met the Committee of Eighteen did nothing, that would be its own responsibility. He himself did not feel that he could take any responsibility for further delay.

M. FLANDIN thought that the Committee had put themselves rather in the wrong from the point of view of procedure.

His own view was that the suspension of hostilities should carry with it a suspension of sanctions. He would be only too glad if this double result could be achieved. The continuance of sanctions had not increased his own popularity in France.

MR. EDEN suggested that the French Government should use their influence with their Italian friends to bring hostilities to an end.

M. FLANDIN said he doubted whether the Italians were any more friends of France than of Britain.

Had Mr. Eden any news as to the state of affairs in Abyssinia? Had he any views on what ought to be the nature of the final settlement?

MR. EDEN thought that the position of the Abyssinians was very bad. Italy was not in a strong position either, and it was doubtful whether she could recommence hostilities in the autumn. If the Emperor could resist until the rains began, it might be easier to arrange peace terms.

M. FLANDIN said that the Italian Government now maintained that their

⁴ See No. 190; cf. also No. 96.

⁵ Cf. No. 21.

⁶ See No. 203.

last battle had been fought in the rain, and that the rainy season would not necessarily hold up operations. Everybody had made a mistake about the prospects of this Italian campaign. The French General Staff had held the view that it would take the Italian forces several years to achieve their object. The French Ambassador in Berlin had reported that the German Staff had said the same thing.

MR. EDEN said that the War Office had held similar views.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR said that no colonial expedition had ever been carried out with so great resources of men and material. No less than 400,000 men were being employed. It would not be prudent to count on Italian military difficulties facilitating the peace settlement.

MR. EDEN thought that the European situation might be causing Signor Mussolini some disquiet.

M. FLANDIN asked whether, apart from the question of League plans, His Majesty's Government had fixed any maximum limit to the terms which it was permissible [*sic*], in their view, for Italy to impose upon Abyssinia.

MR. EDEN said that, so far as His Majesty's Government themselves were concerned, they had fixed no such limit. The question of Imperial interests did not enter into account.

M. FLANDIN said that, so far as the League was concerned, he thought that it was generally agreed that the happiest result would be direct negotiations between the Emperor and the Italian Government, the result of which would be registered by the League. If the Emperor said that he would decline to treat with Italy, the League would be placed in a false position. It was for consideration whether the Emperor ought not to be advised not to take up too rigid an attitude.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR thought that the best thing to do would be to advise the Emperor to open negotiations; and, at the same time, to press the Italians to cease hostilities in return for which sanctions could be raised.

MR. EDEN asked whether the proposal was that negotiations should take place without the intervention of the League.

M. FLANDIN thought that they might take place either in the presence of M. de Madariaga, or not, which ever was most suitable. He would be quite prepared to press the Italian Government (in concert with Mr. Eden, if he so desired) to open serious negotiations and to state in precise terms the peace conditions they would be ready to accept.

MR. EDEN enquired what the procedure would be if the Italian Government declined to take a step in advance. The Committee of Eighteen had adjourned for a few days only, but it had not met for six weeks.

M. FLANDIN said he quite saw this point, but in his view the attempt at conciliation had not yet even begun. If there had been loss of time, it was not entirely the fault of the Italians.

MR. EDEN then turned to the question of the use of gas by the Italian forces in Abyssinia. This was a matter which might well cause great uneasiness to France and Great Britain. The threat was not to Africa only. Dictatorship states might well use gas in Europe, while democratic countries

were quite unprepared for such warfare. Ought not some serious enquiry to be made?

M. FLANDIN said he had no objection to this, provided that the enquiry related to all alleged violations of the laws of war.

MR. EDEN observed that there was a distinction between the irresponsible atrocities of undisciplined military forces and the use of poison gas which could not be other than a governmental act.

M. FLANDIN agreed, and said that the Italians were very stupid to use this form of warfare. But he doubted the wisdom of issuing a formal condemnation at a moment when an attempt was being made to bring hostilities to an end, for this might disturb the negotiations.

Reverting to the general question, MR. EDEN said that he had no objection to M. de Madariaga and the Secretary-General getting into touch with Baron Aloisi while the Committee of Thirteen were sitting. The Committee might make a recommendation to this effect in its next meeting that afternoon.

M. FLANDIN agreed that it was important to give the impression that negotiations were being taken seriously. But he was very anxious to avoid any form or suspicion of an ultimatum, or any threat such as the fixing of a date for the Committee of Eighteen.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR said that if an offer from the Emperor was forthcoming and Italy refused, the Italians would be in a bad position.

MR. EDEN said that he thought that Italy was in a bad position already. She had broken five or six treaties. So far as he was aware the Emperor had not refused to negotiate.

M. FLANDIN said that the Emperor apparently still demanded the complete integrity of Abyssinian territory. It was necessary that he should face realities. The only way to obtain such terms for Abyssinia would be for members of the League to mobilise against Italy, and no Government wished to do that.

He had a suspicion that the Emperor on the one hand, and his European representatives on the other were playing different games. The Emperor himself wanted peace, while M. Jèze wanted to get the utmost out of the League.

MR. EDEN doubted whether this was the position.

M. FLANDIN suggested that, in any event, it would be desirable to secure the presence of an Ethiopian representative at Geneva.

MR. EDEN thought that if an armistice could be arranged within ten days this would be something. But if this was not obtained and negotiations were to be continually put off, war would merely go on, with all its attendant horrors.

M. FLANDIN said that he wanted to get negotiations going, but without the use of threats. The best service the Emperor could render would be to agree to negotiations with Italy.

The best service Italy could render would be to make her peace terms moderate.

MR. EDEN said that he was disturbed at the reaction which the Italian use of gas would have upon the coloured peoples. He found it hard to understand why Italy had done anything so foolish (as well as cruel). She had outraged the public opinion of the world.

(The conversation then turned to the question of the forthcoming conversations between the representatives of the Locarno Powers. This is being reported upon separately.⁷)

⁷ See No. 223 below.

No. 222

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 9)

No. 25 [C 2826/4/18]

GENEVA, April 8, 1936

The United Kingdom Delegate to the League of Nations presents his compliments, and has the honour to transmit copies of the under-mentioned document. Copy sent to Paris.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 222

*Translation of a memorandum communicated by the French Delegation at Geneva,
April 8, 1936*

By a memorandum dated April 8th, 1936,¹ the French Government had the honour to inform the British Government that, having studied the note communicated on the 1st April, 1936,² by M. von Ribbentrop to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, they consider that the counter-proposals formulated by Germany cannot in any degree be considered as constituting a satisfactory reply to the demands contained in the arrangement come to in London on March 19th between the representatives of the Locarno Powers.³

The German Government in effect refuses the satisfaction and the guarantees which have been demanded of them both in order to restore the conception of international law violated on March 7th, and to prevent the recurrence of a similar violation. The unilateral breach of the Treaty of Locarno is in no way mitigated, and no attempt is made to repair a breach of international law.

In the light of this situation the French Government is bound to state that the effort at conciliation attempted on the 19th March has failed. The French Government is convinced that the British Government on its side will be led to the same conclusion when it has finished the examination which is at present in progress.

The French Government must at once concern itself with the

¹ See Introductory Note to this Chapter.

² See No. 193, note 2.

³ See No. 144.

commencement of consultations between the British, Belgian and French Governments provided for in the letter from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the 1st April,⁴ in order to examine 'the steps to be taken to meet the new situation thus created', and then to carry out the decisions which shall have been jointly reached.

The French Government, however, cannot disregard the fact that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, possibilities for conciliation still exist, and they would not wish to lay themselves open to the reproach of having shut the door to the hope of a final settlement before the British Government, a guarantor of the Treaty of Locarno, had convinced themselves of the uselessness of pursuing the present attempt at conciliation.

On condition that a study shall immediately be undertaken of the measures of all sorts which should be taken to deal with the situation, the French Government agree on their side that this joint study does not involve an immediate application of these measures, which would, on the contrary, be made subject to a fresh consultation between the three Governments.

The French Government cannot, however, disguise the fact that the situation would be entirely modified if, in the meantime, the German Government undertook, in the demilitarized zone, the fortification works and preparation of the ground the prohibition of which is required by paragraph 5(3) of the arrangement of March 19th. In this eventuality the signatories and guarantors of the Treaty of Locarno would find themselves in effect in the presence of a clear breach not only of Article 43, but also of Article 42 of the Treaty of Versailles. It is therefore only provisionally, and provided that a breach of Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles is not followed by a breach of Article 42 of that Treaty, that the French Government can abstain for the moment from formally asking the guarantors of the Treaty of Locarno for the immediate execution of their obligations of assistance.

In refusing the effort of conciliation in which the Locarno Powers on their side had gone so far, and in failing to make any gesture which would have indicated that international law had been restored, the German Government have rendered it impossible for the French Government to agree to the opening with Germany of the conversations and negotiations which paragraph 7 of the arrangement of March 19th had outlined.

The French Government attach no less importance, both from the point of view of the security of Western Europe and of the strengthening of European peace in general, to the putting into operation of the general programme defined in paragraph 8 of the arrangement referred to. Besides, they have just emphasised the great importance they attach to this point by making known the 'Peace Plan'¹ which, in harmony with the Covenant of the League, they feel bound to put forward in reply to the proposals contained in the German memorandum of April 1st.

Being anxious to make their contribution to the consolidation of European peace, the French Government accordingly suggest that the representatives

⁴ No. 199, Enclosure 2.

of the Locarno Powers should transmit to the Council of the League both this plan and such of the proposals contained in the German memorandum of April 1st which do not directly concern the security of the Western Powers. It would be the task of the Council to take, at an appropriate time, such measures as it considers useful with the object of examining all these proposals.

Of yet more immediate and more general interest is the preparation and the conclusion of treaties of mutual assistance which could take the place of the Treaty of Locarno in strengthening the guarantees of security for which it provided. The French Government therefore request that the Belgian, British, Italian and French Governments at once undertake the negotiation and the conclusion between themselves of these treaties as well as of the complementary technical agreements foreshadowed in paragraph 7 of the arrangement of March 19. It would be understood that as soon as Germany changed her attitude and gave satisfactory assurances as to her peaceful intentions and her desire to respect international law, she would become a party to these arrangements.

It is understood that the conversations between General Staffs referred to in paragraph 3 of the arrangement of March 19th, which the British Government has stated its readiness to commence at once, shall be continued. Moreover, the French Government is ready, if the British Government so desires, that account should be taken immediately in these technical conversations of the reciprocal assurance which it gave to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in the letter of April 1st from the French Ambassador in London.⁵

To sum up, the French Government has the honour to propose to the British Government that the following decisions should now be taken.

1. A study shall be undertaken without delay of all measures of coercion to be applied in case of need against Germany; the application of these measures is, however, made subject to a fresh Governmental decision.

2. This procedure has a provisional character only and is subject to the reservation that Germany does not commit a breach of Article 42 of the Treaty of Versailles.

3. The negotiation of treaties of mutual assistance and of the complementary agreements referred to in paragraph 7 of the arrangement of March 19th shall be undertaken with a view to the conclusion of such agreements at the earliest possible date.

4. The contacts between General Staffs referred to in paragraph 3 of the arrangement of March 19th shall be continued. They shall be conducted on a reciprocal basis if the British Government so desires.

5. The constructive French plan and the German proposals of April 1st with the exception of those which directly concern the security of the Western Powers, shall be communicated to the Council of the League of Nations, whose task will be to take such action as it may consider desirable in regard to them.

⁵ See No. 199, note 3.

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 9)

No. 26 [C 2827/4/18]

GENEVA, April 8, 1936

The United Kingdom Delegate to the League of Nations presents his compliments, and has the honour to transmit copies of the under-mentioned document, of which a copy has been sent to His Majesty's Ambassador [at] Paris.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 223

Record of Anglo-French conversation held at the Hôtel des Bergues, Geneva, on April 8, 1936 at 3 p.m.

PRESENT: *Great Britain:* Mr. Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; Mr. Strang, Foreign Office.

France: M. Flandin, Minister for Foreign Affairs; M. Paul-Boncour, Minister of State; M. René Massigli, Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

MR. EDEN said that he had only had time to glance at the memorandum which the French Delegation had communicated to him that morning in regard to the programme of the forthcoming conversations.¹ He would study this paper as soon as possible, but his first impression of it was not a happy one. He felt bound to recall that he informed the French Ambassador in London that he would be unable to agree that the effort of conciliation, attempted in the texts of the proposals of March 19th, had failed.²

M. FLANDIN said that he thought that his memorandum ought to simplify Mr. Eden's problem. He did not ask that the letter which Mr. Eden had addressed to the French Ambassador on April 1st³ should come immediately into force and unconditionally. It seemed to him that he had made a great step to meet Mr. Eden. What, in fact, had the German Government contributed to a settlement? Had Herr von Ribbentrop been at all helpful?

MR. EDEN said that Herr von Ribbentrop had not been at all helpful. As regards the French memorandum, the French Government were apparently asking His Majesty's Government to prepare sanctions in advance for application against Germany, should the case arise.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR said that what was proposed was that sanctions should be studied.

MR. EDEN said that he did not see how His Majesty's Government could agree to this. He felt bound to put the question whether the French Government would themselves be in a position to apply sanctions against Germany if Germany were to fortify the zone.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR said that he had no doubt at all on this point. They surely would.

¹ See No. 222, Enclosure.

² See No. 188.

³ No. 199, Enclosure 2.

MR. EDEN said that both the German plan and the French plan were apparently to be sent to the League of Nations, which would then open discussion upon them. Was this procedure likely to lead to any good result if, at the same time, the application of sanctions was threatened?

M. FLANDIN asked whether Herr von Ribbentrop had said that the German Government would, in fact, be unable to do anything in the way of fortifying the zone during the interim period of four months.

MR. EDEN replied that what Herr von Ribbentrop had said was that the German Government could give no promise on this subject, but suggested that, if the General Staffs were consulted, they would say that nothing very serious in the way of fortifications could be done in four months.

M. FLANDIN asked whether the German Government would begin to fortify the zone, or not, in the interim period.

MR. EDEN replied that they had made no promise that they would not. Mr. Eden had put the question several times but had always received the same reply.

M. FLANDIN said that the French Government had repeatedly explained the great importance to them of the question of the fortification of the zone. The re-occupation of the zone and the refortification of the zone were different matters.

As regards the re-occupation of the zone, the French Government had been prepared to say (and in saying this they had made a great concession) that they were ready to regard the re-affirmation of Locarno and the agreement to start Staff conversations as a kind of compensation. One element of security had been lost, and another form of security had been recovered.

As regards the fortification of the zone, no compensation for this would be possible unless some new régime of security for Europe resulted from the negotiations in the League Council. The refortification of the zone was of concern, not only to France, but to the whole of Europe, including Great Britain herself.

This was where he thought he was simplifying Mr. Eden's problem. The final objective in all these negotiations would be the establishment of a plan of reconstruction. Herr Hitler had been the first to launch such a plan. The German plan was not, in M. Flandin's view, an effective one; he himself had offered an alternative; and others might produce their own plans if they wished. He did not think Herr Hitler's plan for Europe would achieve security, and he did not believe that the Council would think so either. The Council, however, would have to study both plans. If something satisfactory issued from the Council's deliberations (and this was what Mr. Eden, in his speech recently in the House of Commons,⁴ had said that he hoped for), M. Flandin did not exclude the possibility that the fortification of the zone might be accepted as part of the general settlement of the problem of the security of Europe. He recalled that the French Government had already agreed that the status of the Rhineland should be a matter for consideration.

⁴ See No. 214, note 1.

What therefore he had in mind was some general security arrangement going beyond the terms of the Covenant, which might be held to balance, or compensate for, the refortification of the zone. This was surely a helpful proposal.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR said that the French Government could not negotiate with the German Government on the matters covered by Part VII of the text of the proposals until the proposed general European security agreement had been concluded.

MR. EDEN explained that the procedure he had in mind was rather different. He had not yet, of course, studied the French memorandum, but his first impression was that it was not possible for His Majesty's Government to agree to it. He would, however, be prepared to continue the discussion on the following day.

His own idea of the procedure was that both the French and the German plans should be communicated to, and considered by, the Council, at which Germany would be represented. The Council might invite the five Locarno Powers to negotiate upon the matters covered by Part VII of the 'Text of the Proposals'.⁵ One of the things he wanted to do was to put a number of questions to the German Government. From that point of view, M. Flandin's speech at Vézelay⁶ had been absolutely right. But it was difficult to put questions across frontiers. The best way to get answers was by way of conversations round a table.

The Council might, at the same time, invite the other interested Powers such as Lithuania and Czechoslovakia to discuss with Germany the proposed non-aggression pacts. It was important to discover what kind of pacts the German Government had in mind. They must, of course, be in harmony with the Covenant.

The Council would in this way organise and regulate the work. He did not see how this programme could be carried through if the study of sanctions had already been set on foot.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR asked what would be the situation of France if at the same time Germany were to fortify the zone. This was a matter which did not concern the security of France alone, but the security of the whole of Europe. If Germany refused to become party to a general European Pact, she would from behind her concrete fortifications threaten the whole of Europe, including Great Britain.

MR. EDEN asked what Monsieur Paul-Boncour would propose to do if Germany refused to refrain from fortifying the zone.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR replied that in that case sanctions ought to be applied against Germany as they had been applied against Italy.

MR. EDEN observed that Germany had not yet invaded France.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR retorted that Germany was doing something much worse than Italy had done; she was preparing the invasion of Europe. Precautions ought therefore to be taken by the most energetic means.

⁵ Cf. No. 144.

⁶ See No. 188, note 6.

M. FLANDIN repeated that there was one thing in the memorandum which ought to give Mr. Eden satisfaction. The French Government were quite prepared to agree that both the French and the German plans—except those parts relating to a new Locarno—should be sent to the Council. This meant that the whole peace plan would go to the Council, except the part that concerned the Western Powers. France could not agree to enter into negotiations with Germany so long as Germany had made no contribution. There was no reason why Germany should not be invited to examine that part of the peace plan which went to the Council. Germany would be represented at the Council, and could develop her arguments. What Mr. Eden apparently wanted, in order to satisfy British public opinion, was that there should be negotiations round a table. What M. Flandin was offering him was not negligible. In exchange, he was asking that the matters governed by Part VII of the text of the proposals should be at least reserved, and he did not ask that the terms of the letter of April 1st should be immediately applied.

MR. EDEN asked in what way M. Flandin proposed to proceed as regards Part VII.

M. FLANDIN said that before negotiations could be opened with the German Government on these matters, it was necessary (1) that a European security pact should be concluded, and (2) that His Majesty's Government should conclude a mutual assistance pact for Western Europe, on the lines laid down in Part VII of the 'Text of Proposals', in substitution for Locarno, this pact being open to Germany if the general negotiations on other matters should have succeeded.

MR. EDEN observed that in Part VII the proposal had been that pacts should be concluded by all the signatories of Locarno, including Germany. So far as Part VII gave any indication as to what should be included in those pacts, the four Powers had only been speaking for themselves.

His own view was that all the five Powers should open negotiations at the invitation of the Council.

M. FLANDIN said that the French Government had always stated that they would not negotiate with the German Government unless the latter had first made some contribution at any rate towards the re-establishment of international law.

He hoped that he had found a way to satisfy Mr. Eden. What had interested public opinion was Herr Hitler's peace plan. What the French Government now offered was that this plan, together with their own, should be discussed by the Council in the presence of the German representative, with the exception of that part of the plan which concerned the Locarno Powers. This part would be reserved.

MR. EDEN said that he would make a careful study of the paper. It was too important a matter for him to discuss in detail at the moment, and he must make all reservations. At present he regretted that he did not see how His Majesty's Government could accept it. But he would consider whether something could be done to meet M. Flandin's view. The great difficulty

seemed to him the proposal that sanctions should be prepared at the moment when negotiations were starting.

(The meeting then adjourned.)

No. 224

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 9, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 31 L.N. Telegraphic [J 2966/587/1]

Immediate

GENEVA, April 9, 1936, 9 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Today's² meetings of Committee of 13 were very difficult.³ Monsieur Flandin argued the Italian case with confident cynicism and did what he could to obstruct any action by the Committee either against the use of gas by Italians or in favour of pressure for cessation of hostilities.⁴

In urging an enquiry into the use of gas and an early result to the effort of conciliation I received encouragement only from the Australian⁵ and Danish⁶ representatives.

Monsieur Titulescu who joined in the discussion with the desire to find a compromise looked tired and ill and in the absence of other leading delegates little is to be expected from the rest of the Committee.

It is difficult to avoid the impression that the French have done a further deal with Italy or that anything less than a proposal to hold an early meeting of Committee of 18 will move them from their negative attitude.

I have accordingly told Monsieur Flandin that such a meeting seems to us inevitable⁷ unless real progress can be made with negotiation and he has tonight sent me word that he has instructed French Ambassador in Rome

¹ No. 225; this telegram and No. 224 were despatched in reverse order.

² This telegram was drafted on April 8.

³ There were two meetings of the Committee of Thirteen on April 8, at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. On the proposal of the chairman, M. de Madariaga, it was decided to proceed first to an exchange of views on the question of the use of gas by the Italian forces, and to consider at the afternoon meeting the position in regard to conciliation in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute.

⁴ The detailed report of the two meetings preserved in the Foreign Office archives (J 2987 and J 3034/587/1) shows that Mr. Eden opened the discussion by asking whether any communication had been received from the Red Cross in regard to the use of gas; after some exchanges between him and M. Avenol, M. Flandin intervened to enquire whether there was any record of enquiries in regard to the use by the Ethiopians of the dum-dum bullet and of the perpetration of atrocities. At the afternoon session Mr. Eden said that the immediate investigation of the use of gas was essential; M. Flandin agreed to an enquiry, provided it was extended to all breaches of the laws of war committed by the belligerents in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute.

⁵ Mr. Bruce.

⁶ M. Borberg.

⁷ Mr. Eden made this observation at the beginning of a conversation with M. Flandin at 2.30 p.m. on April 8; see No. 221.

to see Signor Mussolini urgently to impress upon the latter the need for an early contribution towards the work of conciliation.⁸

Repeated to Rome and Paris. Repeated by Foreign Office to Addis Ababa.

⁸ Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 46 and 62. Foreign Office views were pessimistic. Mr. Thompson commented on April 9: 'Signor Mussolini is in a truculent mood, which bodes ill for the success of the French representation mentioned in the last para. of the Geneva tel. in J 2966/587/1 . . . Are we not misleading British public opinion and incidentally making things worse for Abyssinia by giving, or seeming to give, the impression that the Committee of Thirteen are in a position to exert effective pressure on the Italians? The facts are indeed beginning to speak for themselves.' Sir R. Vansittart's reply is printed as No. 235 below.

No. 225

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 9, 11.45 a.m.)

No. 30 L.N. Telegraphic [J 2984/587/1]

GENEVA, April 9, 1936, 11.46 a.m. [*sic*]

Following from Secretary of State.

Committee of Thirteen met this morning¹ and again this afternoon and discussed:

1. Use of gas by Italian forces and
2. Position in regard to conciliation procedure.²

As regards the former question Committee requested Secretary General to ask International Red Cross Committee for information received by it as to use of gas by Italian forces. On proposal of French representative's [*sic*] information was also requested as to alleged violation of laws of war by Abyssinian Government. A sub-committee of jurists was also appointed to consider various international conventions on the conduct of war and methods of procedure to be followed in establishing violations of such conventions.

After Committee had received its chairman's report on the results of contacts with the two parties which he had been instructed to make at the last meeting I urged strongly that Committee should not adjourn without a definite result to conciliation procedure namely agreement by both sides to a cessation of hostilities and opening of negotiations.³ I was supported by

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 8.

² Cf. No. 224, notes 3 and 4.

³ In the more detailed account of the afternoon's meeting (cf. *ibid.*, note 4) Mr. Eden is reported as saying at this point that the Committee 'had adjourned five weeks ago to enable conciliation to be started and both parties had accepted conciliation. Since that time there had been an intensification of hostilities. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom could not agree to the period of conciliation being allowed to drag on indefinitely. Such a course would be humiliating to the League. Therefore some result of the conciliation procedure must be reached during the present session of the Committee. . . The Committee could not adjourn until definite results had been obtained one way or the other.'

Danish representative. French representative (Monsieur Flandin) made an appeal for further delay⁴ and was supported by Chilean representative.⁵ Committee decided to instruct its chairman and Secretary General in the form of a renewal of London resolution to establish contact at once with Italians and Ethiopian delegation in Geneva.

Committee will meet tomorrow afternoon to consider (1) information from International Red Cross Committee (2) report of sub-committee of jurists and (3) report of chairman and Secretary General on their conversations with parties.

Repeated to Rome and Paris Saving. Repeated by Foreign Office to Addis Ababa as telegram No. 143.

⁴ According to the other account of the meeting M. Flandin said that he wanted conciliation to take place as soon as possible, but he asked 'Was this the moment to insist on negotiations being undertaken immediately? The Committee of 13 had passed a certain resolution in London and he thought it would be rather exaggerated if the Committee now modified its previous decision. M. de Madariaga might have gone to Rome and obtained some information. Conversations could be begun between the parties now, but the period for the obtaining of information should be extended.'

⁵ M. Garcia Oldini.

No. 226

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 9, 6.5 p.m.)

No. 34 Telegraphic [J 3013/84/1]

GENEVA, April 9, 1936, 6.10 p.m. [sic]

Following from Secretary of State.

Ethiopian representatives headed by Wolde Mariam and including Monsieur Jèze came to see me this morning.

Two most important points which they made were as follows.

1. Abyssinian Government will not even now accept anything which goes so far as Hoare-Laval plan.

2. These delegates have been expressly instructed from Addis Ababa to inform me that the Abyssinian Government regard Great Britain as having done everything in her power for Ethiopia and fully recognise that such help as they have received was entirely due to us. If the League had not achieved all they had hoped for Abyssinian Government appreciated and wished to make it plain that they appreciated that this was in no way the fault of His Majesty's Government.

On the other points raised delegates explained that they were prepared to meet Italian delegates provided meeting took place in the presence of the representatives of the Committee of Thirteen: they had strict instructions to oppose any suggestion including even one for an armistice which seemed to them to be designed merely to gain time for the Italians to consolidate their position and prepare for a further advance. It required considerable pressure to induce them finally to agree that they would not oppose an armistice

provided it was clearly intended to pave the way for an opening of negotiations.

General attitude of the delegates was that they entrusted their country's cause entirely to the League and that if the League failed them they were resolved to perish to the last man rather than surrender to Italy.¹

Repeated to Rome and Addis Ababa.

¹ Mr. Peterson made the following comment. 'It must be remembered that M. Jèze did most of the talking—and he is entirely divorced from realities. The last para. was, however, Wolde Mariam, after the S. of S. had temporarily silenced Jèze . . . M. P. 14.4.'

No. 227

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Foreign Office (Received April 10)

No. 20 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2836/4/18]

PARIS, April 9, 1936

Ministry of Foreign Affairs inform me that French representatives at Staff conversations will be Generals Schweisguth (Army) and Mouchard (Air) and Vice-Admiral Abrial.¹

They explain that French service attachés are not in possession of latest technical information, and that above-named officers are of equivalent rank to French Military Attaché in London.²

Copy of note by bag.³

¹ See No. 219.

² In a minute of April 9 Sir R. Vansittart remarked that there would be 'some advantage in our telling the French at once' the names of the British representatives at the forthcoming staff conversations 'as the relatively subordinate rank of our representatives might deter them from wishing to send anybody of too high standing to represent the French Government. And this, I think, is what we desire.' Mr. Sargent, however, pointed out on April 10, commenting on the above telegram, that the French had already selected 'just those senior officers whom we had wanted to avoid'. Sir T. Inskip was in Scotland, but had left instructions that the selection of representatives should be carried out by the Service Departments, 'dependent on the status of the foreign officers who will be attending'. Sir R. Vansittart then commented: 'Instruct W[ar] O[ffice] or C.I.D. accordingly. But an opportunity has been missed by the universal passion for Easter leave. It is strange that in such a time only the F.O. shd remain open. R. V. April 10.'

³ Not printed.

No. 228

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received April 11)

No. 384 [C 2844/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, April 9, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you, herewith, a copy of a memorandum by the Military Attaché to this Embassy, recording views held by members

of the German General Staff, as expressed in conversation, on the crisis arising out of the occupation of the demilitarized zone and on German expansion in the future.

2. I would call your special attention to Colonel Hotblack's observation at the end of paragraph 9 of his memorandum to the effect that the steadying action of the German army is one of time rather than of principle. Pessimistic as this may sound I am convinced of its truth. In other words we must face the alternatives of the development of a policy of aggression by Germany brought about by Herr Hitler before her complete readiness, or of the development of such a policy at a later date when the army, feeling itself ripe for action, gives the word to go.

I have, etc.,
ERIC PHIPPS

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 228

Memorandum respecting the views of the German General Staff

BERLIN, April 6, 1936

1. Officers of the German General Staff continue to be anxious to hear of the views of Great Britain in the present crisis; but owing to the fact that Herr Hitler now has the whole matter in his own hands it is impossible for the General Staff to give much information.

I have had the opportunity for a considerable number of private conversations and I think that the views of the General Staff are as follows.

2. They opposed the action taken by Herr Hitler on March 7th because they considered that Germany was thereby running a risk of war owing to the unprepared state of her fighting forces; such a risk, they considered, would have been very greatly reduced in two or three years' time; even one year would make a considerable difference.

3. Although they consider it most undesirable, from their point of view, that such action should have the result of increasing any ties between Great Britain and France, they do not consider that any form of negotiation could possibly have given them the complete freedom of action in the Rhineland which is their objective; they say it is obvious that France would not willingly give up such a military asset and that Germany had nothing military to offer in return.

4. Now that such action has, however, been taken they do not consider that it would serve any useful purpose if further one-sided restrictions were placed upon Germany, for it is obvious that Germany sooner or later would make another attempt to obtain equality on the Rhineland and that inevitably France would continue to be distrustful and suspicious.

5. With regard to the interim period I think that the German General Staff would probably be prepared to make concessions with respect to not beginning fortifications, because they have come to realize the difficulty of the British position and also because they hope to avoid a commencement of Anglo-French Staff conversations.

6. In spite of all the official and non-official statements that have been made on the subject, the officers of the German General Staff are very suspicious of these conversations. This no doubt is in part due to the very wide conception of 'defence' which is now, and for many years has been, current in Germany. Germany's military opinion considers that her central position necessitates that, on the threat of war, she should take rapid action against one or other of her prospective enemies. This doctrine anticipating attack by military measures has become so general and deep-seated that it is hard for German General Staff officers to believe that Franco-British conversations envisage only a situation in which no action is taken until after France or Belgium have actually been attacked by Germany.

Moreover they consider that such conversations are so much desired by France that she may prefer to continue and develop them rather than to sign a non-aggression pact on terms of equality with Germany and the other Locarno States.

7. It would appear that the policy of bringing the Germanic populations of Memelland, Czecho-Slovakia and Austria into the German Empire is considered at present to be the task of the National-Socialist Party rather than that of the Army. German General Staff officers say that Herr Hitler considers that after a few years of quiet and economic improvement Germany will exercise an enormous attractive power on these Germanic populations, and that opportunities will occur of 'regaining' such populations with little or no bloodshed.

8. In the first case any actual fighting that may be necessary would be carried out by the National-Socialist Party organizations and not by the Army; the task of Germany's fighting forces is to deter other nations from interfering with this course of events.

The German General Staff do not believe that the prospects of carrying this out without a grave risk of a European war are good; they are, further, very anxious that action should not be taken which risks war until the fighting forces are far more ready than they are at present. In addition to the major reason of avoiding being committed to war before they are ready, there is the further reason to avoid being forced by the march of events unduly to hasten the building-up of the fighting services; this particularly applies to the intake of officers. The Army wishes only to accept such officers who are considered, from the point of view of character and position, to be suitable, and they are prepared to be short of officers for a few years whilst large numbers of good-type young officers are being trained. The National-Socialist Party, however, would like the army to accept as officers large numbers of Party members.

9. To most German officers the idea that Germany must expand eastwards is accepted as a matter of course and as an entirely justifiable one; many are eager to play their part in taking a further step in that series of developments of Prussia in which their ancestors distinguished themselves. The steady action of the German army is one of time rather than principle.

10. Most German officers consider that Great Britain has a real interest

in defending the neutrality of the Low Countries, but that she has no justifiable interest in preventing the joining up of Germanic populations on Germany's north-eastern and south-eastern frontiers, or even opposing a German expansion still further eastwards.

11. In spite of some anxiety with regard to Herr Hitler's methods and in spite of a considerable dislike of many members of the National-Socialist Party, the German army as a whole has an enormous respect for Herr Hitler himself. They consider that he has worked wonders in building up the fighting forces so quickly and in avoiding so far any restrictions either qualitative or quantitative for the army or air force.

12. With regard to the new Locarno, of 25 years duration, I think that the German General Staff have no desire to break this as long as there is good prospect of Germany's being able to make some progress eastwards.

13. With regard to pacts with countries on Germany's north-eastern and south-eastern frontiers they consider that separate pacts with each individual country are right and proper since 'in the event of anything happening, action might be localized and a European war avoided'.

14. My impression is that as far as any public opinion exists in Germany, its views are similar to those of the Army; action in the West which might produce another war with England is wrong, whereas a joining-up with Germanic peoples in the East, in the words of a German Minister of State, is clearly the 'Will of God'.

15. With regard to colonies I am unable to ascertain the views of the German General Staff; I think that officers hold divergent opinions; it is clear, however, that they all desire that at the present moment their claim to colonies should be represented as being extremely modest and no threat to the British.

16. In view of the extremely Nationalistic views held throughout Germany it is not easy to believe that modesty could prevail for very long, unless the energies of Germany were fully absorbed in a struggle eastwards.

ELLIOT HOTBLACK

No. 229

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 35 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3014/587/1]

GENEVA, April 10, 1936, 12.45 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Though the meeting of the Committee of 13¹ passed off more smoothly and with more satisfactory results than yesterday,² this has done little to relieve the mood of profound pessimism which prevails here. This was expressed to me today by M. Titulescu amongst others as being the conse-

¹ On April 9 at 4 p.m.; see No. 230 below.

² Cf. Nos. 224 and 225.

quence of M. Laval's behaviour last summer as exemplified by his continued refusal to co-operate whole-heartedly with the League, culminating in the Paris proposals of last December.³ 'Ce cochon de Laval' M. Titulescu graphically described him in the peroration to me. Most members of the Committee of 13 are now acutely conscious of their quandary created by the desperate condition of the Abyssinian army and the intransigence of Signor Mussolini.

Soviet representative in a brief conversation this evening expressed his conviction that conciliation would break down in the next 2 or 3 days. In a recent conversation with the Soviet Ambassador in Rome, Signor Mussolini had made it plain that he had no intention of stopping the war and had moreover expressed some annoyance at Señor de Madariaga's refusal to go to Rome.

Turkish representative has adopted much the same attitude as the Soviet representative, while apparently considering that the Committee of 18 should be summoned to decide what, if anything, it is prepared to do.

Yugoslav representative emphasised to me that his Government's position was the same as it had always been: that every effort must be made to prevent Signor Mussolini's triumphing in his African campaign, or he would become an intolerable neighbour in Europe. For this purpose Yugoslavia was prepared to make great sacrifices. Had we any proposals to put before the Committee of 18 if it met? I was non-committal in reply and said that the Committee must decide for itself since His Majesty's Government had already made its position clear. Was there any chance, the Yugoslav representative asked, of our closing the Canal? I said that this was a military sanction and that I saw no possibility of its being agreed to.

Repeated to Paris, Rome. Repeated to Addis Ababa No. 147 by Foreign Office.

³ See Volume XV, No. 336.

No. 230

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 36 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3015/587/1]

GENEVA, April 10, 1936, 12.45 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Committee of Thirteen met this afternoon.¹

Secretary General reported that International Red Cross Committee were consulting their president and did not know when they could reply to Committee of Thirteen's request. Sub-Committee of jurists submitted a report² to

¹ See No. 229.

² Not printed. The members of the sub-committee, appointed by the Committee of Thirteen at the afternoon meeting on April 8, were M. Oliván, Sir W. Malkin, and M. Basdevant. A copy of their report is filed as J 3156/45/1 in the Foreign Office archives.

the effect that international conventions on conduct of war at present in question contained no provision for procedure to be followed in the event of violations. Nothing in League Covenant assigned any special competence of League to ensure strict application of laws of war. But in view of preamble to Covenant violation of any convention was a matter to which League could devote its attention.

I informed Committee that absence of machinery should not prevent violations being discussed and representations made to, or assurances demanded from, Governments concerned. I proposed that such assurances should be at once demanded; and that an enquiry should also be instituted.³

Committee adopted this proposal subject in respect of an enquiry to a legal opinion being obtained as to whether Committee of Thirteen was competent to set up [*sic*] an enquiry on foot in present case, it being assumed that an enquiry on the spot was not contemplated. This point on which M. Flandin insisted was referred to jurists' sub-Committee. Chairman then reported that he had seen Abyssinian delegation and would see Italian delegation after the meeting. Abyssinian representative had said that his Government were prepared to negotiate either through intermediary of Committee or directly with Italians in presence of Committee's representative. They would at once ask for a clear declaration of what Italians wanted; they had no demands to make of Italy. Their instructions were to agree to no procedure and to accept no solution which was not within the framewor[k] of the League and in spirit of the Covenant; they would sooner face their responsibilities.

Committee then adopted text of a telegram calling on the belligerents to put an end to all violations of the laws of war and expressing the wish to receive assurances in this respect which would calm public opinion.

Committee will meet tomorrow morning to receive further report from its chairman and report of sub-Committee of jurists.

Repeated to Paris and Rome. Repeated to Addis Ababa No. 148, by Foreign Office.

³ A more detailed account of this meeting (J 3076/45/1) reports Mr. Eden as saying that the British Government were most anxious 'that no countenance should be given to an idea which had a certain currency—that it did not matter what happened in respect of gas so long as it happened only in Africa. Secondly, His Majesty's Government had not been influenced, and did not intend to be influenced, in their attitude to the dispute by external considerations or by what might be happening in other parts of the world'.

No. 231

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 10, 11.30 p.m.)

Unnumbered Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3287/4/18]

GENEVA, April 10, 1936

Following is text of *communiqué* issued to the press this evening by the Locarno signatories.

'The representatives of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Italy met at Geneva for an exchange of views on April 10th 1936.¹

They took note of the intentions expressed by the German Government in sub-sections, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of paragraph 22 of its memorandum of March 31st 1936.²

They noted that the German Government had not made a contribution to the re-establishment of the confidence indispensable for the negotiation of new treaties, which would have permitted immediate general negotiations and the application of Article VII of the proposals drawn up at London on March 19th.³

They consider however that it is proper completely to explore all the opportunities of conciliation; for this purpose the elucidation of a certain number of points contained in the German memorandum is in the first instance necessary, notably those referred to in the French memorandum; the representatives of the United Kingdom will for this purpose get into touch with the German Government; in particular, they will enquire what is the meaning attached by the German Government to the bilateral treaties which it proposes, and how these treaties would be incorporated within the framework of collective security or the mutual assistance provided for in the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The representative of France made all reserves in the event of any important changes occurring in the actual situation in the Rhineland zone during the discussions in question. In the event of any such changes the representatives of the four Governments decided to meet at once.

They took note of the fact that the contacts between the General Staffs contemplated in Section 3 of the text of the proposals of March 19th would begin on April 15th next.

They decided to communicate the French peace plan to the League of Nations for a detailed examination; the consent of the German Government will be asked for the similar communication to the Council of the League of Nations of the German memorandum subject to the observations made in paragraph 3 above.

They will in any case meet again at Geneva during the next session of the Council of the League of Nations.

The representative of Italy reserved his approval on behalf of his Government.'

¹ See No. 234 below.

² See Introductory Note to this Chapter.

³ No. 144.

No. 232

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office (Received April 11, 10.45 a.m.)

No. 174 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3028/4/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, April 10, 1936

Dejazmach Nasibu commanding on Ogaden front telegraphed on April 9th from Daggahbur to the Minister for Foreign Affairs stating that on April 8th Italians bombed Daggahbur and Sasabaneh with gas. There were heavy casualties involving terrible sufferings as no anti-gas medicaments are available.

It is established beyond all possibility of doubt that Italians for more than a month past have been relying upon intensive use of gas to drive Ethiopian forces from their prepared positions in the hope of securing decisive results before the League of Nations intervenes. The use of gas represents their best chance of attaining this end.

Would it be possible for Viscountess Gladstone and the Duchess of Hamilton to combine to despatch at once (? by air) supplies of medicines suitable for treating sufferers from gas burns.¹

British Red Cross Society are merely adding insult to injury by continuing to talk about the 'alleged use of poison gas' (see your telegram No. 139).²

¹ Against this paragraph Mr. Eden made the following pencilled comment: 'We must do all we can to help in this as quickly as possible. British Red X should be able to act. I am ready to do anything I can to help. Please speak Tuesday [April 14]. A. E. 12th April.'

² Not preserved in the Foreign Office archives.

No. 233

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 11, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 19 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2849/4/18]

GENEVA, April 10, 1936

Following is translation of Baron Aloisi's statement made at beginning of conversations of Four Locarno Powers.¹

¹ Cf. No. 231. A record of this conversation between the four Locarno powers, communicated to the Foreign Office by the Belgian delegation, gives the following replies to Baron Aloisi's question. 'M. FLANDIN estime que le participation de l'Italie est tout à fait désirable. Il croit devoir signaler à cette occasion que l'Italie n'a pas adressé à la France et à la Belgique la lettre de garantie sur laquelle on s'était mis d'accord à Londres. Le Gouvernement anglais a fait parvenir cette lettre au Gouvernement français et il serait souhaitable que le Gouvernement italien agisse de même. M. VAN ZEELAND appuie la manière de voir exprimée par M. Flandin. MR. EDEN déclare qu'il n'a pas très bien compris la raison de la question posée par le Baron Aloisi et il signale à son tour que le Gouvernement anglais attend la réponse du Cabinet de Rome au sujet des propositions du 19 mars.' In the course of some further conversation Baron Aloisi said that Italy's reasons for not sending this letter were well known; the question which he had put concerned general collaboration. Mr. Eden said that it was for the Italian Government to say whether it was in accord with

Before taking part in your conversations I am instructed by my Government to read to you the following declaration.

Italy being a Signatory of the Treaty of Locarno, in her capacity as a Guarantor Power, has during this long period honoured her signature. The Rhineland crisis having occurred, Italy took part in the meetings at Paris and London, while maintaining an attitude of reserve which is due to the particular circumstances in which she has been placed. But the Italian Government have been forced to notice that in all recent official manifestations of the British Government, Italy has been ostensibly ignored. My Government have consequently instructed me to ask each of you if the presence of Italy is wished for and if her collaboration in the work of European reconstruction on the basis of a new Locarno is desired.

If this were not the case, Italy would have no reason to assume risks and responsibilities and would reserve to herself the right of ordering her line of conduct in consequence.

the London arrangements. Baron Aloisi found Mr. Eden's remarks 'vague' and 'évasive'. On the suggestion of M. van Zeeland, who had been elected chairman of the meeting, M. Flandin then opened the discussion on Germany by referring to his note of April 8. The full Belgian minutes of this meeting are filed as C 3101/4/18.

No. 234

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 11, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 20 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2850/4/18]

GENEVA, April 10, 1936

Following from Secretary of State.

My despatch No. 26 of April 8th¹ containing record of Anglo-French conversation of 8th April on German situation.

A meeting of the four Locarno Powers was held this afternoon to consider French memorandum of April 8th (see my despatch No. 25)² outlining proposed action for immediate future.

At opening of the meeting Baron Aloisi read a statement translation of which is given in my telegram No. 19 Saving;³ this statement is, I understand, being published.

French memorandum urged:

(1) Immediate study of sanctions, but postponement of decision as to their application;

(2) Reserve respecting action to be taken in event of breach of Article 42 (fortifications);

(3) Immediate negotiation by four Locarno Powers of Western Mutual Assistance Treaty proposed in section VII of text of proposals and continuance of present staff conversations under section III of text of proposals;⁴

¹ No. 223.

² No. 222.

³ No. 233.

⁴ Cf. No. 144.

(4) Reference to League of French and German plans without those parts of German proposal dealing with Western Mutual Assistance Treaty.

We urged that effort of conciliation had not been exhausted: and we suggested that His Majesty's Government should be authorised to clear up ambiguities in German proposals. We pointed out that if German replies were satisfactory that might in itself give the French some of the 'compensation' which they said they would desire to secure in the event of the re-fortification of the Rhineland.

Monsieur van Zeeland attempted to reconcile the two positions. He suggested that, if during the interim period the Germans should fortify the zone, this should be considered as a grave fact which would indicate that the effort of conciliation had failed.

This suggestion we did not feel able to accept: and after a long discussion and an adjournment for dinner the text contained in my unnumbered telegram of April 10th⁵ was agreed by the representatives of the four Powers.

⁵ No. 231.

No. 235

Minute on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict by Sir R. Vansittart¹

[J 2973/1000/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 10, 1936

I do not think there is anything *further* to be done in the line of extended *sanctions*. The League is still too weak, too vacillating and too divided. That has been as plain as a pikestaff for a long while. But there may still be something further to be done for Abyssinia in the way of *facilities* or supplies. If that also is found to be impossible, it would be unfair to give to the Abyssinians encouragements that could not be substantiated. But this aspect should surely be thoroughly explored at Geneva before the sponge goes up, as it will automatically, if the present trend of events continues. This course could at least be adopted without unanimity.

¹ Cf. No. 224, note 8.

No. 236

Minute by Mr. Sargent¹

[C 2827/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 10, 1936

The key to this new French proposal is, I think, to be found in remarks by M. Flandin and M. Paul-Boncour on page 4 of the conversation of April 8th.

¹ In this minute Mr. Sargent was commenting on the Enclosure to No. 221 and on the French remarks which appear about the middle of the record.

The 'general European security arrangement' which M. Flandin and M. Paul-Boncour would be prepared to accept as compensation for the re-fortification of the Rhineland will, I suspect, be found to mean that Great Britain should give a direct guarantee, à la Locarno, to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Lithuania.

If we refuse to give this, then the French say they must appeal to our Locarno undertaking to prevent Germany from re-fortifying the Rhineland. This is to be done by threatening Germany with economic sanctions not by the League (who would not consent) but by the Locarno Powers (minus Italy). This threat is to take the form of immediate consultations between France, Great Britain, and Belgium. In reality such a system would mean sanctions by Great Britain alone, for it is only German-British trade which is of any value to Germany in this connexion.

The French thus present us with two alternatives:

(a) British sanctions against Germany to prevent the re-fortification of the Rhineland.

(b) British guarantee of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Lithuania, in return for allowing Germany to re-fortify the Rhineland.

As regards (a), the British public would never allow of sanctions in such circumstances. Sanctions must be authorised by the Council and applied by the League States generally.

Besides, would such sanctions be effective? The closing of the British market to Germany might do a good deal of damage to German finances, which are largely based on the free foreign exchange they obtain from the British market. But, on the other hand, Germany has serious powers of retaliation. She would create a most serious situation in the City by repudiating the Dawes and Young loans and, above all, the Stillstand Agreement.

Even if we succeeded by means of sanctions in preventing Germany *now* from re-fortifying the Rhineland, the time is past when we can hope to maintain such servitudes indefinitely, and it is quite obvious that so long as such a servitude was maintained it would be impossible to negotiate any general settlement with Germany. The inevitable development would be an Anglo-French Alliance for the express purpose of maintaining this servitude, *quod est absurdum*.

Alternative (b) is better than that. It would represent a very definite new commitment to this country, but it need not actually stand in the way of negotiations for a general settlement, although Hitler might well drop his proposals once he realised that he was not after all to be given a free hand in the East and South-East. In fact, his insincerity might in this way be brought to the light of day.

But are we materially, quite apart from anything else, in a position to take on any further commitments, especially in regard to frontiers where there are no *direct* British interests as understood by the British public? Besides, by giving these guarantees we would be definitely pledging ourselves to the policy of the status quo (e.g. as regards Danzig, Memel, and the Corridor),

and at the same time making ourselves responsible for the government or misgovernment of Austria and Czechoslovakia (e.g. suppression of Liberals and Social Democrats by Austrian dictatorship; ill-treatment of Sudeten-deutsche in Czechoslovakia).²

O. G. SARGENT

² Commenting on the above in a minute of April 10 Sir R. Vansittart remarked: '(a) is out of the question: but (b) might not be wholly out of the question, if the proposal took a less definite [and] concrete form than Mr. Sargent suggests. The possibility or impossibility of (b) might in fact turn on a question of drafting, in which the British commitment wd. be watered. So we need not exclude all hope of agreement till we see exactly how much is in the wind of (b). S. of S. on return.'

No. 237

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received April 11, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 232 Telegraphic [J 3029/84/1]

ROME, April 11, 1936, 12.30 a.m.

Signor Suvich who raised the subject himself today¹ seemed much upset at procedure adopted at Geneva; moreover he was indignant that arrangements had been made for convocation of Committee of Eighteen subsequent to meeting of Committee of Thirteen fixed for April 16th.² He said that Committee of Eighteen was not in any way concerned with peace negotiations; further it could have met at any time—to provide this convocation was therefore distinct threat and must make the situation more difficult. Did the Committee of Thirteen, he asked, wish or not wish negotiations to succeed? If they did the line they were taking was not calculated to promote a satisfactory settlement. Success of negotiations held under threat was hardly possible. He added that the wise thing would be direct negotiations between the Emperor and the Italian Government. But was he ready to negotiate, I enquired? To this Signor Suvich answered that it was in his own interests to do so because before long he might no longer be Emperor.

Repeated to Geneva.

¹ i.e. April 10.

² See No. 238 below.

No. 238

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 11, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 37 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3025/587/1]

GENEVA, April 11, 1936, 1.10 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

The Committee of Thirteen met this morning¹ and received report from

¹ i.e. April 10, at 11 a.m.

its sub-Committee of jurists to the effect that the Committee was competent within certain limits to pursue enquiries into violations of conventions on the conduct of war.

The Chairman then reported his conversation with Italian representative. Baron Aloisi had complained that no reply had been received to invitation that Monsieur de Madariaga should go to Rome; invitation was renewed and extended to General Secretary. But Baron Aloisi confirmed that an Italian representative would come to Geneva after Easter. Monsieur de Madariaga had explained his inability to accept the invitation. Baron Aloisi had asked when the Italian representative should come to Geneva.

After a lengthy discussion in Committee the following results were achieved.

1. Italian delegate would be informed that it was hoped that an Italian representative would meet the Chairman in Geneva on Tuesday April 14th and that the question of a visit to Rome should be held over until this meeting.

2. The Committee of Thirteen would be convened on Thursday April 16th.

3. The Chairman of Committee of Eighteen undertook to summon this Committee as soon as possible.

4. Enquiry into violations of laws of war was entrusted to sub-Committee of Jurists.

5. A communication was circulated from International Red Cross Committee regretting their inability to give the information required by the Committee.²

Repeated to Rome and Paris.³

² Cf. No. 225.

³ Mr. Eden returned from Geneva to England on April 11, flying from Le Bourget to Lympne, where he was the guest of Sir Philip Sassoon until Tuesday, April 14. After seeing Mr. Baldwin he returned to Geneva on the afternoon of April 15.

No. 239

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received April 15, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 241 Telegraphic [7 3150/84/1]

ROME, April 15, 1936, 4 a.m.

My French colleague has had two recent interviews with Signor Suvich on April 12th and today, the former before and the latter after he had received instructions from Paris.¹ At the former he impressed two points particularly on Signor Suvich, viz., (a) that Italy would be making a grave mistake if she endeavoured to separate France and Great Britain and (b) the need for moderation in the forthcoming negotiations.

2. The French Ambassador indicated at his second interview today his

¹ Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 64 and 79.

instructions concerned French views on the projected meeting of the Committee of Eighteen but he carefully avoided going into details (see last sentence of paragraph 7 below). He had also stressed once more (a) above.

3. He had asked how Signor Suvich would progress at Geneva. Signor Suvich had replied that Baron Aloisi (who left for Geneva this evening) would make contact with Señor de Madariaga and would arrange methods of procedure for peace negotiations; Baron Aloisi was not however empowered to undertake any negotiations himself. Signor Suvich hoped, as regards procedure, that meeting might take place between Italian and Abyssinian representatives in some Swiss town other than Geneva; he felt the latter was excluded because of its atmosphere and in particular owing to lack of secrecy. If negotiations revealed a reasonable prospect of success or an impasse, report might then be made to the League.

4. Signor Suvich would give my French colleague no indication of Italian terms. He did, however, suggest that if the Italian terms were so and so and Abyssinian negotiator replied that no terms would be considered until all Italian troops had left his country, clearly a deadlock would ensue. Signor Suvich stated that he gave this example to show that it would not be possible for the Italian Government to agree to any cessation of hostilities until there appeared a reasonable prospect of successful negotiations. If and when such a prospect existed hostilities might end.

5. I observed that Italian Government were probably attempting to play for time realizing that Addis Ababa was likely to be in their possession shortly. The Ambassador admitted that this was quite likely since he had understood from Signor Suvich that Italian troops would be occupying Dessie tomorrow; in this case the Ambassador said Addis Ababa was not far distant.

6. How, I then enquired, could Signor Mussolini reconcile Italian claims placed as high as I believed they would be, with his acceptance in principle of invitation of the Committee of Thirteen to negotiate peace in the spirit of the Covenant and within the framework of the League? The French Ambassador replied that he understood—and I gathered that this understanding was derived from Signor Suvich—that the Italian Government interpreted the spirit of the Covenant in a very wide manner. Article 22 for instance spoke of mandate granted to a particular country and the League had already agreed that some control must be exercised over Abyssinia. On my raising the obvious objection to placing a full member of the League under a mandate, the Ambassador observed that these were not his views; he was only repeating Signor Suvich's argument.

7. The French Ambassador then reverted, as he had done in his conversation reporting his interview of April 12th, to great importance which he attached to the postponement of any meeting of the Committee of Eighteen until after the French elections. No French Government, he said, could until after the elections agree to any extension of sanctions. If a meeting of the Committee of Eighteen took place before, marked and striking divergences of opinion must necessarily arise between France and

Great Britain. Although the French Ambassador was silent on the point I had a suspicion that his instructions this morning [? were] in the nature of an assurance to the Italian Government that the French Government would refuse to approve any extension of existing sanctions. This is certainly the Ambassador's own personal hope. He indicated in reply to question from me that it would be far easier for the French Government to continue existing sanctions even in spite of increasing successes of Italian troops than to agree to any extension of them.

Repeated to Geneva.

No. 240

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Foreign Office (Received April 17)

No. 26 Saving: Telegraphic [J 3194/84/1]

PARIS, April 15, 1936

I saw Monsieur Flandin this afternoon. Tonight's leader in the 'Temps' (see my despatch No. 526)¹ might have been written by him. For him, the only course now is direct negotiations between Italy and Abyssinia. Not only will Mussolini refuse to negotiate under the shadow of the League, but he is, in Monsieur Flandin's opinion, far more likely to be amenable to reasonable suggestions from France and Great Britain, if he is negotiating independently. I said that I should be interested to know who would put forward such a proposal tomorrow. It seemed to me that the only person who could do so would be the President of the Committee of Thirteen who might conceivably report to the Committee that his conversations with the Italian and Abyssinian representatives had convinced him that the only way to arrive at a settlement was for Italy and Abyssinia to discuss the matter directly. But it seemed to me difficult for the President of the Council to make such an admission, especially as the Negus, so far as we knew, maintained his determination to negotiate only through, or under the aegis of, the League of Nations. Nevertheless Monsieur Flandin said that he saw no other way out. I observed that if Mussolini refused to negotiate through the League, the question of the Committee of Eighteen arose. Monsieur Flandin said that he much hoped that the Committee of Eighteen would not be called upon to meet. Existing sanctions were losing their efficacy daily. He had information which showed that they were being broken right and left and any extension meant military sanctions, which in turn meant war. To that his public opinion would not agree and what he feared was an acute difference between the two countries to which British insistence on any extension of sanctions would inevitably give rise. He asked that, if the Committee of Eighteen were summoned, the meeting should not be called earlier than next

¹ Not preserved in the Foreign Office archives.

Monday (20th April), as he had electoral engagements which made it impossible for him to leave the country before Sunday evening.²

² This telegram engendered discussion in the Foreign Office as to the efficacy of the sanctions policy. Mr. Thompson in a minute of April 17 thought that recent press statements as to the effect of sanctions and Italian difficulties in Ethiopia might 'give the impression that H.M. Government are desperately grasping at all manner of imponderabilia'. Mr. Jebb (April 17) remarked that the trouble was, 'not that sanctions have failed, but that the Abyssinians have cracked'. He could 'see nothing for it now but either to close the Suez Canal or, in effect, to climb down'. Sir L. Oliphant wrote (April 17): 'We must see what Geneva brings forth within the next few days. I do not believe that the Public wd. stand for the closing of the Canal.' Sir R. Vansittart added the comment: 'I don't think they want war either. We must discuss this when the S. of S. returns. R. V. April 17.'

No. 241

Letter from Sir E. Phipps to Mr. Sargent

[C 3209/4/18]

BERLIN, April 15, 1936

My dear Sargent,

François-Poncet tells me that he knows for a fact that towards the end of March poor Hoesch wrote a pessimistic report to the German Government regarding the eventual anti-German trend of British public opinion. He prophesied that within a year Great Britain would be found to be in the anti-German camp.¹ Ribbentrop, on the other hand, reported that everything in the garden was beautiful, and far more beautiful since his own presence in England.

There are no indications as to who Hoesch's successor will be.² I wager it will not be a full-blooded Nazi. Hitler is too cunning for that. He realises that some really civilised man such as the Prince of Wied (now at Stockholm) or Dieckhoff will hoodwink the English far more successfully than one of his own wild men. There is some talk of Hassell (now at Rome) or of the promotion 'sur place' of Bismarck, but nothing has been settled yet.

I have just heard that when Knox's 'agrément'³ was asked for at Budapest Goering put pressure upon the Hungarians to refuse it. Not only did they not do this, but they appointed Goering's 'bête noire', Masirevich, Minister in London! Tant mieux.

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

¹ The three despatches by Herr von Hoesch, No. 178 (March 21), No. 212 (March 25), and No. 223 (March 27), for the period in question printed in *D.G.F.P., op. cit.*, do not appear to bear out M. François-Poncet's assertion.

² Herr von Hoesch died on April 10, 1936.

³ Sir Geoffrey Knox was appointed H.M. Minister at Budapest on October 12, 1935.

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 17, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 38 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3215/84/1]

GENEVA, April 16, 1935, 9.30 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Monsieur de Vasconcellos who represents Portugal on Committee of Thirteen and is also President of Committee of Eighteen came to see me this morning.

He repeated to me in confidence following account given him by Señor de Madariaga of latter's conversation with Baron Aloisi last night.¹

Baron Aloisi informed Señor de Madariaga that Italian Government insist upon direct negotiations between Italy and Ethiopia. Negotiations must not take place at Geneva (Ouchy is suggested). No representative of the League must be present either as observer or in any other capacity. Italian representative will report progress from time to time to President of Committee of Thirteen. Italy is not prepared to disclose her peace terms to any member of the League but only to Ethiopia. Negotiations must be upon basis of the Covenant as a whole (this apparently means that in Italian view Abyssinia is not entitled to League membership at all). Finally Italy is not prepared to cease hostilities during negotiations.

Monsieur de Vasconcellos said that he had reported foregoing to Portuguese Government who had replied that such terms were completely unacceptable. He added that they might almost have been drafted by Monsieur Jèze himself in view of impression they were likely to make upon other members of the League.

Monsieur de Vasconcellos then said that in view of this situation, which would no doubt be made clear at meeting of Committee of Thirteen this afternoon, he thought of calling Committee of Eighteen for tomorrow. Committee could spend a day or two on its current work. There would for example be a report by Experts Committee on tightening up of existing sanctions. There was also paper which he had just circulated giving preliminary review of effect of existing sanctions upon Italian trade. This report showed how unfounded were current allegations as to ineffectiveness of sanctions at present in force.

He drew attention to one curious fact namely that exports of gold from Italy were much in excess of increased adverse balance of trade. There were he said no doubt normal commercial reasons for this but he thought one reason was 'Le Matin, L'après Midi, et Le Soir' that is to say the expenditure upon foreign and in particular upon the French press.

He said that Committee of Eighteen might then perhaps also have to consider whether or not existing sanctions should be extended. He was not much in favour of application of oil sanction alone as this would not be likely to

¹ Baron Aloisi's instructions and his account of this conversation are given in his *Journal*, pp. 372-6.

produce its effects within any useful time. The Portuguese Government shared this view. If it could have been applied last October or November it would almost certainly have brought the war to an end within three months. But for Monsieur Laval present situation would never have arisen and the whole thing would have been over before now.

It had however occurred to him and also apparently to Secretariat that a possible new sanction might be prohibition by members of the League of all exports destined for Italy. This of course would include oil as well as everything else. Some preliminary study of such a measure would of course be necessary.

I told Monsieur de Vasconcellos that attitude of His Majesty's Government had not changed. They were prepared after joint examination to apply any financial or economic measure against Italy which other members of the League were willing to apply.

We agreed that in the first instance Committee of Eighteen might well:

1. Make clear on the basis of Monsieur de Vasconcellos' report the degree of effectiveness of present sanctions.
2. Do what is possible to tighten up application of existing sanctions.
3. Formally declare that existing sanctions will be maintained.

Even this might have a heartening effect on the Emperor's morale. Whether or not further sanctions were to be studied would be a matter for the Committee itself to discuss and decide.

Repeated to Paris and Rome. Repeated to Addis Ababa by Foreign Office telegram No. 159 of April 17th.

No. 243

Record by Sir R. Vansittart of a conversation with M. Corbin

[J 3281/89/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 16, 1936

The French Ambassador came to see me this afternoon and, after some conversation on various other topics, followed up the visit of M. Cambon yesterday¹ by plunging again into the Abyssinian question. He said that the

¹ According to Sir R. Vansittart's record of this previous conversation (J 3218/45/1), M. Cambon asked urgently what line the British Government proposed to follow in the forthcoming proceedings at Geneva. Sir R. Vansittart referred to the speeches by Mr. Eden in the House of Commons on April 6, and by Lord Cranborne on April 9 (see 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 2503-11 and 3059-64). 'It was clear that M. Cambon felt that his principals would not be altogether satisfied with this definition and that they were suspicious lest some unpleasant surprise should be sprung upon them.' After commenting adversely on misleading statements in the French press, Sir R. Vansittart said that 'His Majesty's Government, I felt sure, had never had and had not now any intention of taking individual action. They had always been convinced that the League must act as a whole.' He indicated that this meant that they had no intention of pressing for military sanctions. Later

prospects of further German action in Europe were now so near and so menacing that the Abyssinian question must at all costs be liquidated lest worse befall and lest the minor tragedy that was there being enacted should be followed by a far graver one in Europe.

I did not attempt to contest the Ambassador's assertion that European prospects are black, but in regard to Abyssinia I said that in our apprehensions as to European developments owing to the entanglement of Italy in Africa, we must not lose sight of the fact that there would be at least equally grave losses on the other side of the ledger if the League of Nations was to be forced to face discredit or disruption. If the Italians were to overrun and conquer the whole of Abyssinia the League might be confronted by an accomplished fact, but that did not necessarily mean that the League should regularise it. Personally I thought such an expectation would be not only impossible; it would be making the worst of both worlds. We should be better advised to keep our heads and await developments during the next weeks. At present the Italians were in a mood to impose the most extravagant terms without having completed the conquest of Abyssinia, and I was not prepared to accept as a fact a total Italian conquest of Abyssinia before the rains until I had actually seen it achieved. After all, it was still possible that they might not be able to bring off such a coup. In that case they might be faced by a period of long and exceedingly expensive inactivity on a rapidly dwindling gold reserve. There would then be a greater possibility of their agreeing to terms which the League could honourably approve than if everybody were now to throw up their hands at a moment when the Italians were almost insensately flushed with victory. There was still therefore a possibility of preserving the credit and the authority of the League.

Italy's terms would in any case no doubt be hard, but they might not be impossible in the summer even if they were impossible now; and if Italy could be brought to realise the imminence of the German threat to Austria and sincerely desired to return to the Stresa front to meet it, she would see that her interest lay in being more accommodating than Signor Mussolini showed any signs of being at present. We were all deeply interested in the integrity and independence of Austria, but Italy was far more vitally interested than anybody else, and we must bear that in mind.

Moreover, I said, I did not see how public opinion either in this country or anywhere else could be expected at this stage to recognise treaty-wise the accomplishment of the full Italian design upon Abyssinia. Italy had not only been a criminal at the start, but she had deepened her criminality by the use of gas. It was not only a shameful piece of barbarity in itself, but would cost all living beings dear in the future. As I had said to M. Cambon yesterday, no effective return to Stresa would be possible so long as Italian inhumanity stood in the way. Indeed it seemed to me personally that it would be

in the conversation he remarked that 'there was certainly a considerable element in the French press (and I would not put it past a good many of their politicians too) who were becoming unhealthily imbued with a desire to lift sanctions and skedaddle. That would be midsummer lunacy, and it was nowhere near summer yet.'

impossible unless Abyssinia could hold out until the rains, and unless Italy both moderated her appetite and her methods of glutting it in the course of the summer.

The Ambassador admitted that he personally agreed with this reasoning, but he was afraid that it might become vitiated by this country being pushed again by the force of circumstances into too active a lead or into some unrealisable attempt to extend the measures of coercion already being applied to Italy. On this score I repeated what I had already told M. Cambon, and this seemed to tranquillize him, although he still spoke of the danger of the force of events, and particularly of the assembling of the Committee of Eighteen.

Before departing the Ambassador reverted again to the incontestable dangers now overshadowing Europe, and I assured him that in our judgment of events we were fully as perspicacious and reasonable as the French Government. But I repeated that it would be neither perspicacious nor reasonable to sacrifice the League to any measure born of panic or despair.²

² M. Corbin's account of this conversation is given in *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 83. An undated note by Mr. Eden on the filed copy of this record read: 'Thank you. This is just what is wanted. A. E.'

No. 244

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 17, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 40 Telegraphic [J 3210/84/1]

GENEVA, April 17, 1936, 1.10 a.m.

Following from the Secretary of State.

I lunched today with Monsieur de Madariaga when Monsieur Boncour and Monsieur Avenol were also present. Previous to the lunch M. de Madariaga had drawn me on one side to say that he was very disturbed at the attitude which the Secretary-General was adopting. He was proving himself almost as French as M. Flandin. M. de Madariaga had derived a pessimistic impression from his interview with Baron Aloisi. M. Avenol on the other hand had professed optimism and had produced a report with the terms of which M. de Madariaga was far from satisfied. He had secured certain important amendments but even so he did not [?think] that the report properly represented the tone of the discussion. In the circumstances he was giving me his own notes of the conversation (text of which comes in my immediately following telegram)¹ which I could check with the official record, and I should thus be in a position to ask any questions that I might think necessary at the Committee of Thirteen in order to clarify that record.

During lunch M. Avenol's attitude seemed to justify M. de Madariaga's anxieties. He surpassed M. Boncour in excuses for the Italian attitude. He

¹ No. 245 below.

more than hinted that he considered unreasonable the Abyssinian attitude in refusing to go to Ouchy to converse alone with the Italians. I asked him whether it was the view of the Secretary-General of the League of Nations that the victim of aggression was not entitled to ask that negotiations to settle his fate should take place at Geneva in the presence of the League.

In the course of lunch M. de Madariaga exploded in indignation at the French attitude and told M. Boncour and M. Avenol roundly that however preoccupied the French Government might be with the European situation it was about time that Signor Mussolini began to share their preoccupations and to show this in his attitude towards the League. Otherwise that institution would have no alternative open but to take action against the aggressor or cease to exist.

M. Boncour was dejected throughout lunch and took little part in the conversation except to reiterate the difficulties of a French Government confronted with an election.

The more sanctionist the actions of Geneva, Monsieur Boncour argued, the more seats the Left would lose in France, therefore the less helpful would the French Government be after the elections.

M. Avenol indulged in a long argument which was intended to prove that the present was only the first stage in the negotiation, and that he was sure that the Italians would become more reasonable once they received a negative Ethiopian reply. It was a pity therefore to rush the meeting of the Committee of Thirteen. We rejoined that if that was the whole difficulty, the Committee of Thirteen could well be adjourned for a few hours while the Italians were given this information. If Baron Aloisi then asked for delay [?for] general reconsideration of his Government's position, he could be given it for a few hours, but if, as was to be anticipated, he merely reiterated the Italian Government's position, then the Committee of Thirteen could meet and not even M. Avenol [?could] pretend that it had rushed matters.

Eventually this course was decided on.²

² In a minute of April 17 Mr. Thompson remarked: 'M. de Madariaga's criticisms of the Secretary General of the League strike me as being akin to the pot damning the kettle for being black.'

No. 245

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 17, 1.15 p.m.)

No. 41 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3226/84/1]

GENEVA, April 17, 1936, 12.50 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Following is translation of text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

1. Baron Aloisi began by saying that he was at our disposal.

¹ No. 244.

2. I asked him if he had nothing to say to us.
3. He replied that he was ready to answer my questions.
4. I then explained that there were two points regarding which we desired to be in a position to inform Committee of Thirteen. The first dealt with procedure. What are the views of the Italian Government in regard to method of carrying on negotiations? The second dealt with substance matter. Abyssinians consider 'within the framework of the Covenant' implies more or less active attendance of representatives of the League of Nations.
5. Baron Aloisi replied that he thought it necessary to set forth with precision some of the realities of the present moment. These realities could only be modified by three forces: Abyssinia which was not in a fit state to do so; the League of Nations which was not in a position to do it, and England which could only change the situation by force. At this point Baron Aloisi asked us whether we agreed. I begged him to bear in mind the fact that our function was to seek information and that it did not seem proper to express our opinion on analysis of the situation which he had set forth.
6. Passing to the question of procedure Baron Aloisi told us that in the view of his government direct negotiations were necessary. By this he meant negotiations without intervention of representatives of the League of Nations even as observers.
7. I asked whether in the event of the other party desiring more or less active attendance of representatives of the League of Nations Italian Government would maintain its point of view. Baron Aloisi replied that his government considered direct negotiations without the League of Nations were an essential condition of their acceptance. He added that his government could not negotiate at Geneva where conditions of publicity seemed to them prejudicial to success of negotiations. Any other place appeared preferable and in particular Ouchy.
8. For the rest they were ready to keep the League of Nations informed of progress of negotiations and the League would have to examine the result at the end and accept it or reject it but they did not consider it possible to negotiate simultaneously with Abyssinia and with the League.
9. As regards 'spirit of the Covenant' the Italian Government proposed to negotiate in accordance with this spirit but they understood the term in an integral sense. They could not accept an interpretation which emphasised certain articles and neglected others. He drew particular attention to Article 22.
10. As regards substance question Baron Aloisi did not think he could submit concrete proposals to us for two reasons; the first was that the situation was changing daily and the second was that if such proposals were submitted to us the Committee would have to take note of them and that implied abandonment of principle of direct negotiations.
11. The Secretary General then asked Baron Aloisi if it would be possible to begin negotiations with an armistice. Baron Aloisi after having emphasised the fact that no one desired an armistice more than those whose nationals

were suffering from consequences of war observed that an armistice would endanger the objectives of the war and security of the troops in the field unless such guarantees were given as would be equivalent to very onerous conditions. In these circumstances he considered the most rapid means of bringing about an armistice was to negotiate peace quickly.

No. 246

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 17, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 42 Telegraphic [J 3229/84/1]

GENEVA, April 17, 1936, 6.37 p.m. [sic]

Following from Secretary of State.

My telegram No. 39.¹

President of the Committee of Thirteen and Secretary-General yesterday morning communicated the terms of the Italian reply² to Abyssinian delegation who stated that it was quite impossible for them to negotiate on the conditions laid down by the Italians.

President and Secretary-General were subsequently able to obtain from Baron Aloisi a very slight concession as regards the extent to which the Committee of Thirteen would be associated with the negotiations.³

Monsieur de Madariaga reported progress at the secret meeting of the Committee of Thirteen yesterday evening. It was decided after a long discussion that he and Secretary-General should approach Abyssinian delegation again in order to obtain their reaction to the latest Italian attitude. Committee will meet again this afternoon to hear the result.

Repeated to Paris and Rome. Repeated to Addis Ababa No. 163 by the Foreign Office.

¹ In this telegram from Geneva of April 16, despatched at 9.30 p.m., Mr. Eden said that the Ethiopian delegation had visited him that morning, and that their view of the situation was far from pessimistic; 'while disclaiming knowledge of exact military situation they insisted on the authority of the Emperor himself that northern armies were still in being although they had suffered heavy losses. Rains were expected seriously to impede military operations at any time from now on.' Commenting on this telegram in a minute of April 17, Sir R. Vansittart wrote: 'It has got to rain *very* hard—and *very* quick—and *very* long!'

² As made to Señor de Madariaga and M. Avenol on April 15: cf. *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 361-2, and No. 242.

³ 'The Italian delegation agrees that the Committee [of Thirteen] should be kept abreast of the progress of the conversations': *L/N.O.J.*, *ibid.*, p. 361.

No. 247

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 17, 9 p.m.)

No. 45 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3231/757/1]

GENEVA, April 17, 1936, 8.50 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Monsieur de Vasconcellos asked to see me this morning. He said he had been reflecting on the position and had come to the conclusion that in view of the difficulties created for the French Government by the electoral period, some patience would be necessary in the proceedings of Committee of Eighteen.

He was now convinced that any attempt at this stage to add new sanctions would place continuance of existing sanctions in jeopardy. At the same time he saw the importance, from the point of view of maintenance of Abyssinian morale, of continuing the work of the Committee of Eighteen. He could quite well on his own authority invite the Committee of Experts to examine and report upon the communications received from the governments on the application of sanctions and to proceed with adoption of its draft report on tightening up of existing sanctions. The Committee of Eighteen might even perhaps itself meet to receive a report on the situation from the President of the Committee of Thirteen and to instruct the Experts Committee to proceed to study any possible further measures. But beyond this he did not think he could go.

In any case everything would depend on the outcome of this afternoon's meeting of the Committee of Thirteen.

Repeated to Paris. Repeated to Addis Ababa (No. 164) by Foreign Office.

No. 248

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 18, 1 p.m.)

No. 21 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3027/4/18]

Very Confidential

GENEVA, April 17, 1936

Following from Secretary of State.

M. Paul-Boncour asked to see me this morning when he said that he wished to have a conversation as to the general state of the relations existing between our two countries. He asked me to make no official record of what he was saying to me because he was speaking privately as a friend, and as a leader of one of the Left Wing Parties in France. He would not conceal from me that both he and other Left Wing politicians had become much perturbed at the extent of the anti-British feeling which was developing in France while there was a similar, if not stronger development of anti-French feeling in Britain. This was a very serious matter for those who believed, as he did,

that the co-operation of the two great Western democracies was indispensable to the maintenance of peace in Europe. As far as M. Paul-Boncour was concerned he assured me that if eventually those forces in France which were inclined if not to Fascism at least to a close understanding with Fascist Italy and a separation from the League and from Great Britain, were to triumph, then he himself could have nothing to do with any such Government. He would rather go out of public life. At the same time he was bound to note how strong this tendency was. At a recent conference in Paris M. Sarraut had shown to M. Flandin and himself a report on the forthcoming elections presented by the *Préfets* in France, whom I would know were Government supporters with special opportunities for assessing the trend of public opinion. In their view if nothing abnormal happened a gain of about 50 seats by the Left might be expected. On the other hand if the Right were given any further pretext for an outburst of Anglophobia which could be combined with an attack upon the League, then it was to be feared the Left would lose at least 50 seats. It had to be remembered that sanctions were frankly unpopular in France at this moment, and that it was the Left Parties who were regarded in France, and rightly so, as the main upholders of a League policy and in consequence of a policy of sanctions. Any event therefore in the next few weeks which would tend to make sanctions more unpopular would increase the disabilities under which the French parties of the Left would have to labour at the polls.

After the election, however, M. Paul-Boncour had arranged with the other leaders of the Parties of the Left that there should be an immediate meeting between them, and that in the event of their having been successful at the polls they would then issue a joint statement upon France's foreign policy. They would do this even before Parliament met. M. Paul-Boncour maintained that it was the failure to do anything about Germany's reoccupation of the zone which had had so disastrous an effect upon French opinion, for those who supported the League and Locarno in France had always stressed the value of British co-operation. French public opinion now felt that that co-operation had not been forthcoming at a critical moment. M. Paul-Boncour admitted that the attitude of our public opinion was no doubt in part due to M. Laval's policy of last summer on the Italo-Abyssinian dispute,¹ and he made no attempt to defend that policy. Nonetheless he repeated that its effect upon British opinion and our apparent coldness in the matter of the Rhineland had had the unhappiest possible effect.

I replied that I could not admit that we had been so backward in the matter of the zone. Staff conversations were now taking place in London.² These had been asked for at repeated intervals by the French in post-war years, hitherto without response. M. Paul-Boncour at once admitted the value of the staff conversations, and stated that they were decisive so far as French security was concerned. France asked for nothing more. But there was another problem—that of Central Europe. Once the zone had been re-fortified how could France go to the aid of Czechoslovakia, whom she was

¹ See Volume XIV, *passim*.

² Cf. No. 231.

bound to assist if the latter were attacked by Germany? It was this aspect of the re-fortification of the zone which was clear to Frenchmen and which so greatly perturbed a considerable section of the French public who were precisely those who had supported co-operation with the League in the past.

M. Paul-Boncour added that he did not despair of the future. Much would depend upon the result of the elections in France, but he begged me most earnestly to take no action which would make the position of the Left more difficult at the election, further embittering Anglo-French relations, and perhaps imperilling future co-operation between our two countries.

M. Paul-Boncour concluded by stating that he had done all he could with the French press to ensure that there should be a cessation of their anti-British polemics. In this M. Paul-Boncour appears to have been markedly successful so far.

Repeated to Paris No. 23 Saving; figures by post to Rome No. 11 Saving.

No. 249

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 18, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 46 Telegraphic [J 3246/84/1]

GENEVA, April 18, 1936, 1.25 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

My telegram No. 44.¹

At the meeting of the Committee of 13 this morning² the President reported the refusal of Abyssinian Delegation to open negotiations on terms suggested by the Italian Government.

The Committee agreed that the mandate entrusted to the President and the Secretary-General to seek information from the two parties was now exhausted and that the phase of conciliation initiated by the Committee's appeal to the two parties on March 3rd³ had come to an end. It was decided that the best course would be for the Committee to report to the Council.

The Committee will meet again tomorrow afternoon (1) to consider report of Jurists Committee concerning the use of gas and other violations of laws of war and (11) to approve the report to be submitted by the President on its behalf to the Council.

The Council will be summoned for Monday morning April 20th.

The President of the Committee of 18 will report in writing to the members of the Committee on the present situation and will suggest that if circumstances do not demand an earlier meeting the Committee should meet again

¹ This telegram of April 17 recorded a conversation of even date in which Señor de Madariaga told Mr. Eden of his reluctance to concur in the line which the Committee of Thirteen was following. He would have preferred a declaration that no hope of conciliation existed and that further sanctions were to be immediately imposed.

² This telegram was drafted on April 17.

³ Cf. No. 13.

during the ordinary session of Council in May. Meanwhile work of the Committee of Experts will proceed.

Repeated to Rome and Paris. Repeated to Addis Ababa by Foreign Office No. 165.

No. 250

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 18, 12.20 p.m.)

No. 47 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3256/84/1]

GENEVA, April 18, 1936, 12.15 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

This result seems on the whole as satisfactory as we could have hoped to obtain in the existing difficult circumstance. During recent meetings of Committee of Thirteen I have had an uneasy feeling that there was real danger of the Sanctions front breaking up and that any attempt on our part or on anybody else's to add to existing Sanctions would have precipitated this tendency. There was moreover the consideration that an open Anglo-French rift upon this issue must have an unwelcome reaction upon the general European situation and the attitude of the two Dictators. Moreover there is no financial or economic Sanction which could be serious, the effect of which would be immediate, and it is probable that the fate of Italy's Abyssinian campaign will depend upon the power of the Emperor to keep his weakened armies in being during the next few weeks. Finally we had also to consider the effect on French elections of a further accentuation of Anglo-French differences. In this connexion see my telegram No. 21 Saving² which goes to you tonight by bag, recording conversation with Monsieur Boncour this morning. We have now secured the following results.

First a termination of attempts at conciliation which were becoming a farce and damaging to the League and to all concerned except the Italians. Secondly we have secured public meeting of Council at which Abyssinians can once again state their case and the Italians will once more have to undergo the ordeal of a world expression of opinion at their conduct and methods of warfare. It is to be anticipated that this part of our procedure will be particularly welcome to Abyssinians. Thirdly the Sanction front is still intact, and the experts will continue their work meanwhile in perfecting the effectiveness of existing Sanctions.³

Repeated to Rome and Paris.

¹ No. 249. Telegram No. 47 was drafted by Mr. Eden.

² No. 248.

³ Mr. Thompson minuted: 'I find it very difficult to extract any satisfaction from this situation. We are confronted with the gravest blow the League has ever received *plus* the failure of the policy pursued by H.M. Govt. The effects on British prestige are bound to be serious. G. H. Thompson. 20/4.'

No. 251

Foreign Office to Mr. Edmond (Geneva)

No. 29 Telegraphic [J 3355/89/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 18, 1936, 4.20 p.m.*

Following from Sir R. Vansittart for Secretary of State. Personal.

I pointed out to French Ambassador this morning that you had taken the line at Geneva that existing sanctions must be maintained but had not pressed for any new ones or for a meeting of the Committee of 18. I therefore thought that the French representatives could and should show complete solidarity with His Majesty's Government on Monday.¹ We had done our part to facilitate this and it would be only ordinary wisdom for them to do theirs.

I reminded him of the dangers of mutual recrimination when a difficult situation was becoming more difficult. This tendency on either side of the Channel must be firmly resisted. Not only would it facilitate wedge-driving but it would have a lamentable effect upon the League. Both France and the United Kingdom had everything to lose from the League's enfeeblement. I therefore urged him to do his best to see that on Monday there was an impressive French contribution to our joint policy. Nothing but good could come of it, and nothing but harm if it failed to materialise.

¹ i.e. April 20 at the League Council Meeting; cf. No. 249.

No. 252

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Foreign Office (Received April 21)

No. 537 [C 3059/4/18]

PARIS, *April 18, 1936*

Sir,

The President of the Council, who had luncheon with me at the Embassy to-day, expressed great satisfaction with the account which he had received of your interview with M. Boncour (Geneva telegram No. 21 Saving of April 17th).¹ He admitted that a considerable divergence still existed between the policies of our two governments, a divergence due in some measure to the weakness of his predecessor's attitude towards the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. But he said that he dreaded the prospect of this divergence being advertised and exaggerated in the press and elsewhere. In the first place this would cause an increase of Italian intransigence, and secondly it would have a detrimental effect on the prospects of the 'Left' parties in the forthcoming elections; if in the present unfortunate state of French public opinion the electorate were faced with a choice between England and Italy the Left, who favoured a policy of collective security and co-operation with

¹ No. 248.

His Majesty's Government at Geneva, might well fail to secure a majority and we should then have to deal with a Government of the Right definitely hostile to Great Britain.

2. M. Sarraut did not think that Italy and Germany had as yet reached any definite understanding, for the ultimate objectives of the two dictators as regards the Danubian countries were still diametrically opposed to each other. He was much more preoccupied by the possibility of a working agreement between Germany and Japan—a strictly business proposition by which Japan, true to her traditional opportunism, would benefit by the preoccupations of the Western Powers and Germany would wait, as she had done about Tangier in 1904, until the other European countries were at grips with a Far Eastern crisis to impose her colonial and economic ambitions. M. Sarraut, as you know, was at one time Governor-General of Indo-China, and his critics have always maintained that the Yellow Peril is one of the bees in his bonnet. He certainly spoke of the danger of Japan with all the force of conviction. From this subject he passed spontaneously to the question of Germany's colonial claims. France, he said, would never under any circumstances give up any of her own colonies, nor would she be prepared, he thought, to surrender a mandate except under two conditions—(1) that such surrender should be part of a final comprehensive settlement in return for tangible and reliable guarantees on the part of Germany—if indeed it was within the power of human ingenuity to devise such guarantees; and (2) that His Majesty's Government were prepared to make an equivalent contribution. He thought that the sooner the two governments discussed the problem the better, as he feared that we might at any moment be faced with a demand from Germany; and the sooner we were prepared to embark on conversations the better he would be pleased. By the standard of 'morality' Germany had no valid claim, her colonial rule had been condemned by the Treaty of Versailles and the justice of this condemnation had recently been vindicated by the racial prejudices and persecutions which distinguished the Nazi régime. In any case, on the colonial question it was essential that France and England should have a preconcerted policy and that neither country should embark on negotiations with Germany alone. This part of the conversation took the form of a monologue by M. Sarraut and I was careful not to pursue the subject as I gather that the prospect of immediate conversations would be unwelcome to His Majesty's Government.

3. In speaking of the immediate future M. Sarraut alluded to the difficulties with which both our governments had to contend in dealing with public opinion and the press. Italian propaganda had unfortunately been as successful in France as German propaganda in England. The English, he was well aware, had criticised the weakness of the support accorded by M. Laval's Government to the League of Nations. The French on the other hand felt even more strongly about the Rhineland than we did about Abyssinia. If only England had been able, as he dramatically expressed it, on the morrow of the violation of the demilitarised zone to cry 'present' in reply to the appeal of France and Belgium there would have been a tremendous

revulsion of feeling and the whole of France would have been swept off its feet by a wave of enthusiasm for England. I refrained from suggesting that such a wave of enthusiasm might have swept France into rather dangerous depths, nor did we indulge in sterile speculation as to the possible effects on European history of such spontaneous affirmation of our solidarity; but there is no doubt that in this country the agents of Germany and Italy have exploited with a marked degree of success the very reasonable hesitations of His Majesty's Government.

4. I found M. Sarraut as frank and friendly as ever and I feel sure that he is determined to work in co-operation with His Majesty's Government to the utmost of the limits imposed on him by his public opinion and the exigencies of internal politics.²

I have, etc.,

GEORGE R. CLERK

² Minutes on this despatch show agreement in the Foreign Office that discussions with the French about the possible transfer of a mandate could not be undertaken until the inter-departmental committee (cf. No. 50, note 5) had reported. Mr. Baxter wrote (April 24) that he was urging on the committee the need for haste. Mr. Wigram commented: 'We could not surely proceed except in close accord with at least the French & Belgians & perhaps others. R. F. W. 25/4.' Sir R. Vansittart replied: 'I agree. But there is no question of present conversations. I don't anticipate that our own minds will be cleared for a long while yet. This despatch contains some important passages, and sh^d. be seen by the S. of S. R. V. April 25.' A note on April 28 read: 'Seen by the S. of S.'

No. 253

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received April 22)

No. 467 [J 3382/45/1]

ROME, April 18, 1936

Sir,

With reference to the last paragraph of your telegram No. 125¹ and my telegram No. 227,² on the subject of renewed assurances to be obtained from Signor Suvich regarding the immunity of Addis Ababa from bombing by Italian aircraft, I have the honour to inform you that the final position is as follows.

2. My French, German, Belgian, Greek, Turkish and Egyptian colleagues have all taken the required action with Signor Suvich—the last, namely the Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires, on the 15th instant. My United States colleague did not, I understand, make a similar *démarche* but contented himself with addressing a letter to the Under-Secretary of State giving a list of those towns in Abyssinia in which there are in one form or another United States interests.

I have, etc.,

ERIC DRUMMOND

¹ No. 209.

² Not preserved in the Foreign Office archives.

Letter from Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Mr. Sargent

[C 3322/4/18]

BUDAPEST, April 18, 1936

My dear Sargent,

Herr von Papen, whom I had not seen since the Saar, was passing through Budapest yesterday and came to call on me.¹ Buoyant and outspoken as ever he launched at once into high politics. First the colonial question, with the usual arguments—excessive population, industrialisation and unemployment. I told him that here we seemed to be in the same box; we in England had a far higher density of population than Germany and about the same amount of unemployment,—unfortunately the Empire did not seem to solve the problem for us: the Colonies were not suited to white immigration and the Dominions did not want our emigrants. He turned to the question of access to raw materials. I said that I knew that committees were studying the question at home, but for myself I thought the only real remedy lay in getting out of the welter of bankruptcy in which most of the world was living. This could only be done by means of a world-wide agreement, but the vicious circle had turned since last we talked about these things and now no general economic settlement appeared possible until political confidence was restored. This brought us to the demilitarized Zone. Papen told me he had advised Hitler against creating a *fait accompli*, to which Hitler had rejoined ‘Would the French ever agree to our re-occupation of the Zone?’ Papen replied that no French Government would ever dare to do so. Therefore, said Hitler, there was nothing for it but the *fait accompli*. Papen had then suggested that an offer to return to the League would make the *fait accompli* more acceptable and facilitate future discussion of questions such as the colonies. What element of veracity this story may contain I cannot guess—but I have, on occasion, known Papen to tell the truth.

We then turned to German re-armament. Papen began ‘The main object is to relieve unemployment’. At this we both laughed heartily. He then went on to say that it was not really on the scale one thought and that there was a great shortage of officers. I said that I could well imagine that for the moment there was a shortage both of officers and of reserves, but that, at the pace things were going, this would very soon be remedied. Meanwhile the world was wondering with anxiety what its objective was. I could not myself think for a moment that Germany felt herself threatened by Russia. The Russian garrisons were 300 miles further from the German frontier than in 1914 and the communications behind them were as bad if not worse than then. The Russian Army was thus probably as impotent in attack as it always had been, but defensively it was no doubt stronger. I could not

¹ Mr., later Sir, G. G. Knox was Chairman of the Saar Governing Commission from April 1, 1932 to March 1, 1935; Herr von Papen was the German Plenipotentiary for the Saar Territory from November 1933 to July 26, 1934, and was then appointed German Minister in Austria on Special Mission. Cf. Volume XII, No. 79.

therefore believe that Russia, for no visible end, would attack Germany or that Germany, where everyone had studied Napoleon's campaigns, could seriously contemplate walking into that wasps' nest. Papen nodded agreement and said 'The fact is that to have a foreign policy one must have an army behind it.'

On the subject of Austria he said he did not feel he was making much headway, all he wanted was a settlement *en famille*—not at the dictation of France or Italy—which would eventually bring the Austrian Government reasonably into line with that in the Reich.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Selby.²

Yours ever,
GEOFFREY KNOX

² Sir Walford Selby had been H.M. Minister at Vienna since July 6, 1933.

No. 255

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 19, 3 p.m.)

No. 48 L.N. Telegraphic [J 3257/84/1]

GENEVA, April 19, 1936, 1.20 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Monsieur Soubbotitch, Yugoslav representative, asked to see me this afternoon¹ when he said that he wished in all friendliness to repeat to me certain rumours which were at present current in Geneva in order that he might correctly inform his Government as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government. It was being said in French official circles and also by certain other sections that were particularly friendly to His Majesty's Government (Monsieur Soubbotitch instanced Turkish representative on the Committee of Thirteen) that yesterday's decision² indicated that His Majesty's Government's foreign policy had undergone definite modification, that they felt it no longer worth while continuing Sanctions against Italy and that they were even in direct communication with Rome with a view to settlement between the two countries of outstanding difficulties in relation to Lake Tsana and other matters. Monsieur Soubbotitch added that these rumours were supported by the argument that if the only reason for a postponement of new Sanctions were the forthcoming French elections it would have been possible to continue the negotiations until after those elections, thereby avoiding the situation in which it was clearly the League's duty to impose new Sanctions.

In reply I told the Yugoslav representative that there was no foundation for these rumours, that His Majesty's Government had in no measure modified their policy and that we were not in direct communication with the Italian Government on any subject. Our policy throughout this dispute had been founded upon membership of the League and though I knew it was

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 18.

² See No. 249.

difficult for others to believe it Lake Tsana and our imperial interests were in no sense the motive of our actions.

Monsieur Soubbotitch thanked me for my reply which he and his friends of the Little Entente required. Nevertheless he did not conceal from me that he was profoundly anxious as to the situation which would be created in Europe if Signor Mussolini was allowed to triumph in Africa. Both parties hesitated on the Rhine, and France hesitated in the Mediterranean, the two Dictators were triumphing. This was surely a very grave outlook for the future of European peace. He wished to speak frankly. Why did we not close the Canal?

I replied as I had previously explained that while His Majesty's Government were fully prepared to fulfil their obligations under the Covenant and to take part in any financial or economic Sanctions which were jointly decided upon we were not prepared to go to war with Italy. In any case I added Members of the League could not close the Canal unless authorised to do so by the recommendation of the Council. Monsieur Soubbotitch must know as well as I that there was not the least chance of such a resolution being passed. To this the Yugoslav representative reluctantly agreed.

Monsieur Soubbotitch reiterated, however, his very real preoccupations about the future in the Mediterranean. He drew particular attention to the state of affairs in Albania where he stated that Italy at the price of a . . .³ was steadily strengthening her position, with consequences that might ultimately be unwelcome to other European Powers.

Finally Monsieur Soubbotitch re-emphasised the willingness of his Government to follow any lead which His Majesty's Government might give and they hope[d] that the existing Sanctions might in any event be persisted in even though Signor Mussolini might set up some puppet Emperor in Abyssinia; for much more than [*sic*] was at stake in the present dispute than the future of an African country.⁴

Repeated to Paris, Rome and Belgrade.

³ The text was here uncertain.

⁴ This telegram elicited some lengthy minutes. That of Sir R. Vansittart on April 20 included the comment that the Yugoslavs 'are irritating examples of the breed that is known as a Sooner. They wd sooner we did the job on Italy than they did, and they have merely pushed maliciously without contributing anything. If they had shown anything like as much virility as we have—and, heaven knows, they stood to gain—Mussolini wd *not* have got away with it . . . and we shd have had very little trouble with the French.' Lord Stanhope thought, however (April 21), that 'there are other nations even worse in their support *by deeds* of the League than Yugo-Slavia. Switzerland has thought mainly of her own pocket, & the Scandinavian countries have made it clear that they will only act if such action involves little loss & no risk. . .' Lord Cranborne wrote: 'There is none that doeth good, no not one—except possibly ourselves. At the same time, I think Sir R. Vansittart is a little hard on the Yugoslavs. They have co-operated in sanctions as much as any other member of the League, & had they done more, say, mobilised, it would have added only one more to our anxieties. I, like Lord Stanhope, find the Scandinavians more exasperating, & the attitude of France in this dispute, however understandable it may be, the hardest of all to forgive. C. 22/4.' Mr. Eden wrote: 'I agree with Lord Cranborne. A. E. 24 April.'

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office (Received April 19, 5.40 p.m.)
No. 197 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3253/3249/1]

Most Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, *April 19, 1936*

Geneva telegrams Nos. 38,¹ 45² and 46³ to Foreign Office.

My object in recently renewing my application for leave was to seek an early opportunity of explaining in person the situation in this country which my telegraphed reports have failed to make clear.

Now that League attitude towards the use of gas superimposed on League attitude towards Sanctions has reduced to a minimum Ethiopia's power of resistance to aggressor I feel, being possessed of an intimate knowledge of the diplomatic intercourse with this country which forms the background of present crisis, and being in daily contact with the stark realities of local situation, I should be failing in my duty if I did not lay plainly before you the minimum steps which are immediately necessary to save something of the honour of League and of England.

Personally I hold that interests of League and of England are also at stake, but however this may be, the question of honour being involved is beyond all dispute.⁴

With all the emphasis at my command I repeat that immediate financial assistance to Ethiopia is essential in addition to extension of Sanctions. Since any reconsideration of Ethiopia's appeal to the League for such assistance (the refusal of which has never been reconciled with principles) must take time I urge the following immediate steps by us.

1. An initial sum of one hundred thousand pounds sterling should be made available for use of Abyssinian Government at or via Gambeila.⁵

2. Gambeila should be reinforced and road joining that place to Sudan frontier and to Gore should be completed.

3. A political officer should be sent to Gambeila for liaison duties with Abyssinian Government.

4. Our Disposals Board should ship to Khartoum for earliest despatch to Gambeila as many rifles, machine guns and ammunition as possible.

5. I should be authorized to inform Abyssinian Government immediately that if seat of Government is moved in the direction of Gore they will find

¹ No. 242.

² No. 247.

³ No. 249.

⁴ This remark was not well received in the Foreign Office. Sir R. Vansittart minuted (April 20): 'We shall have to make it clear to many others besides Sir S. Barton that the honour of H.M.G. is not involved: it is the honour of *everyone except* H.M.G. that is at stake, for we alone have *done* anything at all. We ought to say that *soon*. (The Abyssinians have already and handsomely recognised that.) [cf. No. 226]'

⁵ Gambeila was an enclave in Ethiopian territory on the Ethiopian-Sudan frontier which under article 4 of the Anglo-Ethiopian treaty of 1902 was leased to the Sudan to be administered and occupied as a commercial station; cf. the Maffey Report, Volume XIV, p. 774.

material and financial support and communication with the outside world available via Gambeila and the Sudan.

These measures are based on the only practicable basis left since all movement northwards, eastwards and southwards is already barred. They are in harmony with League's principles and with our existing treaty rights. They represent but a small price to pay for past delays and I can suggest nothing else likely to give the League a further chance. Their value depends on immediate application.⁶

Repeated to Geneva by Foreign Office telegram No. 32 of April 19th.

⁶ Foreign Office telegram No. 169 of April 21 (despatched at 11.25 a.m.) informed Sir S. Barton that Mr. Eden was returning to London that day and would reply as soon as possible to Sir S. Barton's recent telegrams.

No. 257

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office (Received April 19, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 198 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3254/3249/1]

Most Immediate Secret

ADDIS ABABA, April 19, 1936

Since my telegram No. 197¹ was sent, Minister for Foreign Affairs has called to tell me that the Government are considering removing to Gore and leaving the Municipality in charge of policing of Addis Ababa. A final decision will be taken tomorrow. He asked me whether we would allow telegraphic communication via the Sudan wireless station at Gambeila in order to enable them to keep in touch with Geneva and foreign countries.

I did not of course allude to my telegram No. 197 but promised to refer the request to you at once.

I trust I may be authorised to promise assistance in this matter of telegraphic communication, and I should now like to add to measures urged in my telegram No. 197 the immediate provision by us of an adequate telegraphic link between Gore and Gambeila. Use might perhaps be made of the wireless transmitter which Abyssinian Government have stored at Gambeila and which was intended for Gore.

Repeated by Foreign Office to Geneva telegram No. 33 of April 19th.

¹ No. 256.

No. 258

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office (Received April 20, 10.50 a.m.)

No. 199 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3337/33/1]

ADDIS ABABA, April 20, 1936

Following for War Office from Officer commanding Legation Guard.¹

Present situation. Double wiring across paddock completed. Sufficient stone for 2 or 3 sangars stacked on site of Piquet. 3rd should be ready in 2 days. Garage well yielding 800 litres daily, 3,000 litres hoped for after further excavation two metres. Aden rations and wire received in legation today. Waterproof capes received.

¹ The normal Legation Guard had been strengthened in September 1935 by a detachment of Indian troops; see No. 312 below.

No. 259

Foreign Office to Mr. Edmond (Geneva)

No. 34 Telegraphic [J 3253/3249/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 20, 1936, 3.5 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State.

Sir S. Barton's telegram No. 197.¹

It is impossible for His Majesty's Government to give financial assistance to either belligerent.

The only possible form of financial assistance would be a fund initiated by the Council of the League to which League members are *invited* to subscribe.

We are not prepared to initiate such a proposal but if the Council initiates it we will contribute to the loan if others do.

We presume that the decision of the League Council must be unanimous.

But if the Council sets up a fund, it is not essential that *all* Members of the League should subscribe, but we would not subscribe unless the French do. Any contributions would of course be made to a League fund and not to Abyssinia direct.

Your Cabinet colleagues are somewhat sceptical as to result of lending any small sum at the present moment although they still feel that it might enable Abyssinia to hold out in a corner of her territory and perhaps eventually to secure better terms.

¹ No. 256.

No. 260

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received April 21, 2.30 p.m.)
No. 85 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3068/4/18]

BERLIN, April 20, 1936

Your telegram No. 18 (Saving).¹

I think the best course will be to communicate French memorandum as you suggest when German Government are asked to agree that their plan should be communicated to the Council of the League.

A member of my staff took an opportunity of sounding head of press department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He replied that the German Government had of course no official cognisance of French memorandum and he imagined that it would be officially communicated in due course. He did not however think there was any hurry and he had not heard any suggestion of a grievance that it had not yet been done.²

¹ This Foreign Office telegram of April 16 pointed out that the French Government's peace plan (see Introductory Note to this Chapter) had not been communicated to the German Government on the ground that the recent German proposals had not been communicated to the French Government. It asked Sir E. Phipps's views as to the best time for the British Government to communicate the French plan officially to the German Government. Cf. No. 217, note 4.

² A note by Mr. Wigram of April 23 on the filed copy of this telegram says that this question was discussed with Mr. Eden and Sir R. Vansittart on April 22. 'Sir R. Vansittart's preference was for action via Sir E. Phipps: but the whole matter will be reconsidered when the draft of the questionnaire is available' (cf. No. 231).

No. 261

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received April 21)
No. 23 Saving: Telegraphic [J 3350/84/1]

GENEVA, April 20, 1936

Following from Secretary of State.

Council met first in private and then in public session this morning.¹

As the present session is merely a resumption of that which was held in London in March, a formal decision was taken to add the Italo-Abyssinian dispute to the agenda which had hitherto only included the question of the Rhineland.

The public session was opened by the reading by M. DE MADARIAGA of the report of the Committee of Thirteen.

THE PRESIDENT then suggested that the Council might like to hear the statements of the parties to the dispute before themselves speaking.

BARON ALOISI then made a declaration. He began by reaffirming that

¹ The President was Mr. S. M. Bruce (Australia). Very full minutes of this, the ninth meeting of the 91st (Extraordinary) session of the Council, are printed in *L/N.O.J., op. cit.*, pp. 358-76.

Italy remained faithful to the League despite the fact that justice had been denied to her. She was ready to negotiate. It was not suggested that the League should be excluded from the negotiations. Italy demanded the application of the whole covenant and not of certain articles only. Not only the letter of the covenant should be applied but its spirit which had no significance without a respect for justice and without a lively understanding of history. He asked what contradiction with the covenant existed in demanding negotiations away from Geneva. Hostilities could only be suspended when the preliminaries of peace had been established. An armistice would be too dangerous for Italy unless it included the occupation of all possible centres of mobilisation of the capital and of any points on the frontier through which deliveries of arms could be made, in fact practically the occupation of the whole of the enemy territory. He concluded this part of his speech by seeking to show that the check which the efforts at conciliation had suffered was due to Abyssinia and not to Italy. Finally he made some observations on the letter addressed by M. de Madariaga to the Italian Government about the use of poison gas.² He made a reserve as to the scope which the Committee of Thirteen had given to the mandate which it received in December last from the Council to examine the situation as a whole. The Committee's duty was to bring about a settlement. He noted that the Committee considered that the use of gas was not justified. In doing so the Committee had constituted itself as judge in a particularly complicated case. The Gas Protocol of 1925 did not forbid reprisals for breaches of the laws of war. The Italian Government could not accept either the principle or the substance of the Committee's opinion in this matter.

M. WOLDE MARIAM (Abyssinia) then made a short statement. The Abyssinian Government maintained its point of view and protested against the delay in giving assistance to the victim of aggression. He repeated Abyssinia's request that the League of Nations should find that Italy had only accepted to negotiate (1) to gain time, (2) to postpone the application of further sanctions, and (3) to drive a bargain for her support in a European dispute. No one in the world believed that Italy was ready to negotiate in the spirit of the covenant. He asked that the League of Nations should apply Article 16 of the covenant in its entirety in order to prevent the triumph of an aggressor.

Council then adjourned until this afternoon.

Please repeat (saving) to Paris and Rome.

² See No. 183, note 3.

Note¹ by Sir T. Inskip on the Staff conversations
[C 3307/4/18]

2 WHITEHALL GARDENS, S.W. 1, April 20, 1936

I circulate herewith for the information of my colleagues a copy of the Report on the Staff Conversations which I have received from the Service Representatives.²

T. W. H. I.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 262

Most Secret

ADMIRALTY, April 17, 1936

Sir,

We have the honour to report that we have completed the Staff Conversations with French and Belgian representatives in accordance with instructions by His Majesty's Government.

(2) A plenary meeting was held on Wednesday, the 15th, in the Board Room of the Admiralty, at which Admiral James defined the scope of the Conversations. The French and Belgian representatives expressed themselves in full accord with the purport of Admiral James' explanation.

(3) The meeting then adjourned and the Conversations were continued at the three Ministries.

(4) The Naval Staff Conversations were limited to an interchange of information with regard to ports and the state of forces now in commission, and certain questions with regard to communications, liaison officers and signal code. The Conversations were, therefore, brief, but were satisfactory to the French and Belgian representatives.

(5) The Military Staff conversations were limited to a statement of the British forces available and a request to French military representatives for information as to facilities at ports, transport from ports to assembly area, and assembly areas. In addition, air protection in port and assembly areas was discussed. It was agreed that the questions raised should be studied in the War Ministries concerned and the information transmitted through the Military Attachés.

The French and Belgian military representatives expressed themselves as

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 110(36).

² Copies of minutes giving fuller details of conversations between the British, French, and Belgian representatives are preserved in the Foreign Office archives, filed under the following numbers: C 3712/4/18, between air staff representatives, April 15 and 16; C 3745/4/18, between naval staff representatives, April 15 and 16; C 3422/4/18, between General Staff representatives, April 15 and 16. A French translation of the last of these, with General Schweisguth's general report on the discussions, is printed in *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 97. A note on the General Staff discussions by Mr. R. Allen reads: 'The chief point of interest from our point of view, & apart from the many technical matters discussed, is the statement of the French . . . that they c^d defend their own frontier from Basle to Belgium & w^d prefer that the British troops shd help the Belgians. R. Allen. 7/5.'

satisfied with the Conversations. The Belgian representative raised the question of the provision of war material in the event of aggression by Germany and the destruction of Belgian factories. It was pointed out that this was outside the terms of the present Conversations, but was a matter for discussion between the Governments of the two countries.

(6) The Air Staff Conversations were complicated by the fact that the French representatives produced a 'plan of work' which covered far more ground than the British representatives were authorised to explore. Some of the points, such as the strengths of the respective forces and the availability of aerodromes, were fully discussed, and others concerning technical detail were remitted for further examination by the Service Attachés. It was, of course, inevitable that the discussions on a number of subjects, being outside the scope of the Conversations, had to be 'reserved'. In general, however, the talks were considered by all delegations to have been useful and satisfactory.

(7) A final plenary meeting was held in the Board Room at the Admiralty during the afternoon of April 16th. Admiral James, on behalf of the British representatives, expressed their view that the Conversations had been entirely satisfactory, and that certain ground had been explored which, if ever the time came to extend the scope of the Conversations, would be extremely useful. The French and Belgian representatives expressed themselves in entire accord with these sentiments.

It was agreed that each Service should prepare a *procès-verbal* as a record of the proceedings.

We have, etc.,

W. M. JAMES	J. G. DILL	C. L. COURTNEY
Vice-Admiral	Lieut.-General	Air Vice-Marshal

No. 263

Mr. Eden¹ to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 170 Telegraphic [J 3352/84/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1936, 1.40 p.m.*

The outcome of the Council meeting which closed yesterday² was a Resolution accepted by all members of the Council except the Italian representative who voted against it, the effect of which is to indicate that recent attempts to

¹ Mr. Eden returned to the Foreign Office on April 21.

² The reference is to the tenth meeting (private and public) of the Council at 3 p.m. on April 20, following the ninth meeting on the morning of that day (see No. 261), and to the eleventh meeting (private then public) at 9.30 p.m. that evening. At the tenth meeting most of the members spoke at length: these speeches were recorded in full in *L/N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-91. Mr. Eden's speech was also printed in *The Times* of April 21, 1936, p. 14. In the course of his speech he said: 'At this solemn hour, when we must each of us be conscious of the gravity of our decision, Governments must be prepared to shoulder their responsibilities and clearly to state the policy which they are prepared to pursue. In the view of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, it is our manifest duty as

secure the opening of peace negotiations have failed and that existing sanctions will be maintained in force.³

This result is of course disappointing as it might logically have been expected that failure of conciliation would be followed by an increase of financial and economic pressure. Issue was, however, complicated by imminence of the French elections which, other reasons apart, made it impossible for French Government to take any new decisions, and by uncertainty of general political situation which has naturally increased preoccupation of certain European Governments with events nearer home. There was also consideration that no means of economic and financial pressure at disposal of League could have any immediate effect upon course of the war.

In these circumstances all that it was possible to achieve was the maintenance of the existing sanctions position (latest information as to which shows that sanctions are having a steadily increasing effect) and the fixing of the next meeting of the Committee of 18 (which deals with sanctions) for about the second week in May when French elections will be over.

Members of the League at least to maintain those economic and financial sanctions which have been put into force in connection with this dispute. In order, however, that there may be no shadow of doubt about the position of His Majesty's Government, I must make it clear that, in addition to the action under Article 16 which has already been taken, His Majesty's Government, as has previously been stated, are ready and willing to consider, together with their fellow-Members of the League, the imposition of any further economic and financial sanctions that may be considered necessary and effective for the fulfilment of the obligation which we all of us bear, whether we like it or not, in this dispute.' Lord Avon's account of the discussions and their background is given in *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 374-9. Cf. also Baron Aloisi, *Journal*, pp. 376-7; he remarks that 'Durant la séance privée et après, Eden est venu par deux fois me trouver pour s'entretenir avec moi, ce qui a été très remarqué de tous.' There is a fairly full French account in *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 99.

³ *L.N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 392-3, prints the full text of the Resolution, which included a 'supreme appeal' to Italy to 'bring to the settlement of her dispute with Ethiopia that spirit which the League of Nations is entitled to expect from one of its original Members and a permanent Member of the Council'. Baron Aloisi notes that he arrived back in Rome on the afternoon of April 22. 'Conversation avec Suvich. Ici, au ministère, mon succès à Genève a semblé spectaculaire. Il paraît que le Duce en est ravi.' Aloisi, p. 377.

No. 264

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 172 Telegraphic [J 3253/3249/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1936, 7.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 197.¹

While your suggestions have been carefully examined² I regret that it has been necessary to apply to them the test of collective action. His Majesty's Government have never undertaken since the beginning of this dispute, and

¹ No. 256.

² The first draft of this telegram was revised by Sir R. Vansittart and then considerably amended by Mr. Eden on his return from Geneva.

cannot now undertake, individual action apart from what may be done by the League as a whole.

From this point of view replies to your suggestions are as follows:

(1) The extension of financial assistance is nowhere enjoined by the Covenant: it was not raised at yesterday's meeting of the Council (see my telegram No. 170):³ and it is I fear hopeless to expect that anything can be done for the present and in any case before the French elections. His Majesty's Government would of course contribute to any fund raised by the League provided the French did the same, but you should in no circumstances encourage Abyssinians to build hopes on this.

(2) There can be no question of our undertaking road-making in Abyssinian territory.

(3) I will give further consideration to this. But see (5) below.

(4) His Majesty's Government cannot themselves supply Abyssinia with arms.

(5) His Majesty's Government alone cannot go so far as is suggested nor can they assume direct responsibility for maintaining Abyssinian resistance by constituting the Sudan a base of supplies. But Gambeila would be kept open just as Berbera is at present for the passage of such supplies as the Abyssinians themselves may be able to order or as organisations such as the Red Cross may be expected to forward.

Further suggestion advanced in your telegram No. 198⁴ must depend entirely upon resources available at Gambeila as to which I am consulting Sudan Government urgently. So far as can be ascertained in London there is no Sudan wireless transmitter at Gambeila but only a land telegraph line. We should not of course be prepared to undertake setting up a wireless station at Gore, and facilities for which it may be possible to arrange at Gambeila must depend upon extent to which Abyssinians are themselves in a position to transmit their messages there.

I am aware that this response to your telegram will inevitably disappoint you but I would remind you that His Majesty's Government have not only never undertaken any individual obligations, but on the contrary have always made it clear that they could only act collectively, although they have always tried to give to the League a lead and an example. The necessary limitations of His Majesty's Government were indeed laid down explicitly in my predecessor's telegram to you No. 395 of November 15th last.⁵

The Abyssinian Government may be disappointed that the League has not done more for them, but they have themselves recognised (see my telegram No. 34 from Geneva)⁶ that His Majesty's Government have done all that lay in their power.

I need hardly say how much I regret not to be able to give you greater encouragement in your difficult position. I can however assure you that His Majesty's Government are sincerely grateful for your admirable handling of the situation.

³ No. 263.

⁴ No. 257.

⁵ Volume XV, No. 220.

⁶ No. 226.

No. 265

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 118 Telegraphic [J 3352/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1936, 11 p.m.*

In the course of a last conversation with M. Paul-Boncour before leaving Geneva, the latter assured me that once the French elections were over the French Government would be willing to participate in a determined effort to bring the Italo-Abyssinian conflict to an end.

Monsieur Paul-Boncour stated that he had already been in communication with M. Sarraut on the subject and had made it clear to him that I had only consented to agree to the moderate programme now being adopted at Geneva¹ on condition that this effort were seriously made by our two Governments once the French elections were over. M. Sarraut had fully understood and approved.

The French Government apparently consider that the best means of carrying out this attempt successfully would be by a joint *démarche* by the Ambassadors of the two countries in Rome at the opportune moment.

¹ Cf. No. 263.

No. 266

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received April 22)

No. 88 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3083/4/18]

BERLIN, *April 21, 1936*

My telegram No. 87 Saving.¹

Except for this article in 'Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz' there has been no comment on Mr. Baldwin's speech and newspapers have either [? slurred] over or omitted passage referring to Herr Hitler.²

On enquiry at press department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'Times' correspondent was informed that suggestion that Herr Hitler might not be sincere could not be passed over in silence. Rather than start a controversy newspapers had been instructed therefore to ignore the passage and it would be left to 'Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz' to make the necessary rejoinder.

¹ Of April 21, not printed. It summarized the article (of April 20) mentioned in the next paragraph.

² Mr. Baldwin's speech at Worcester on April 18 included this passage: '... But Hitler, the Dictator of Germany, has it in his power to-day, from his position, to do more at this moment to lift that black shadow of fear from Europe than any other man living in Europe. I say he has it in his power. God grant he may have the will. If he has the will, nothing that this country can do will be left undone...' *The Times*, April 20, 1936, p. 8.

CHAPTER IV

Presentation of British questionnaire to German Government: Mr. Eden proposes discontinuance of sanctions against Italy

April 22—June 19, 1936

No. 267

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 173 Telegraphic [J 3392/3249/1]

Immediate Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 22, 1936, 2.35 p.m.

Your telegram No. 191.¹

Transport from Jibouti can be arranged at short notice for the Empress and her family. Admiralty would however prefer to convey party direct to Suez in one of His Majesty's ships. Entourage must be cut down most rigidly and should not exceed six persons in addition to the members of the Imperial House.

Italians would have no ground for attempting to remove at sea a party which would be composed of persons who are no more than distinguished refugees. This would be so even if Italy were attempting to exercise belligerent rights at sea which she is not. It would, however, be as well that no male member of Empress' entourage should be of military age.

I assume that retreat to the west is for this party entirely out of the question. Otherwise it would seem to offer certain advantages.

Colonial Office are enquiring of High Commissioner for Palestine as to his readiness to receive Her Imperial Majesty and party at Jerusalem.² In the meantime, press reports from Addis Ababa announce that the Empress does not intend to leave her country. Can you confirm this?

¹ In this telegram of April 18, Sir S. Barton reported that the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs had decided, with the Emperor's agreement, that the time had come to send the Empress and family to Jerusalem, where the Empress had recently endowed a convent. Sir S. Barton had been asked whether the British authorities could provide transport by sea from Jibuti for the party.

² Foreign Office telegram No. 182 of April 25 informed Sir S. Barton that the High Commissioner for Palestine, Lt.-Gen. Sir A. G. Wauchope, had no objection.

No. 268

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 179 Telegraphic [J 3387/3249/1]

Important

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 23, 1936, 6.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 200.¹

You should act on the assumption that your relations with the Italian forces of occupation will proceed upon the basis that you are a representative of a neutral Power. It is very unlikely that the Italian Government would endeavour to treat the representatives of League States as though they were allies of Ethiopia and at war with Italy. It would in fact be impossible for the Italian Government to adopt such an attitude while retaining their diplomatic representatives in London and the other capitals concerned.

The answer to your questions (1) and (2) is, as stated by Satow,² that the Italian Government have the right to insist upon the withdrawal of the missions of League States from the territory which is under their military occupation.

The answer to question (3) is that if the Italians should so insist they must accord full diplomatic immunity for such time as is reasonably necessary for the missions (including in my view Legation guard) to prepare their withdrawal. The inviolability of the missions' archives must also be respected.

The answer to your question (4) is that the occupying military Power has the right to say whether consuls should or should not be allowed to remain. In practice it is more usual for them to be allowed to stay.

¹ In this telegram to the Foreign Office of April 22, Sir S. Barton enquired as to the procedure that he should follow in the event of the occupation of Addis Ababa by Italian forces. He pointed out that Sir E. Satow's *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice* (Third Edition, London, 1932), did not, in the relevant sections 440 and 441, cover cases of occupation by forces of a country which the League of Nations had condemned as the aggressor. The Foreign Office reply was based on the advice of the Second Legal Adviser, Mr. W. E. Beckett.

² Satow, *loc. cit.*, presumably: but this edition of the work does not appear to refer directly to the position of the League of Nations in this connexion.

No. 269

Letter from M. Corbin to Sir R. Vansittart

[C 3116/4/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, LONDRES, *le 23 avril 1936*

Cher Sir Robert,

J'ai été chargé de vous faire part verbalement des questions que mon Gouvernement jugerait opportunes de voir poser au Gouvernement du Reich pour éclaircir certains points du mémorandum allemand.

En vue de gagner du temps, je vous remets directement la liste de ces questions et je vous serais reconnaissant quand le moment en sera venu de me mettre en mesure d'informer mon Gouvernement de la forme que le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté croira devoir donner à sa *démarche* à Berlin.¹

Veuillez agréer, &c.,

C. CORBIN

ENCLOSURE IN No. 269

le 21 avril, 1936

Le mémorandum allemand (paragraphe IV) vise un mandat conféré au Gouvernement allemand de représenter le Reich et la nation allemande suivant certaines directives tracées par le peuple allemand.

Quelle est la portée de cette distinction entre le peuple allemand, le Reich et la nation allemande? Signifie-t-elle, en particulier, que le Gouvernement allemand entend tirer du mandat qu'il a pu recevoir du peuple allemand le droit de représenter et de défendre les intérêts de populations n'ayant jamais ressorti, ou ayant cessé de ressortir, au Reich, et situées hors des frontières actuelles de celui-ci?

2. Faut-il déduire du mémorandum allemand, et notamment des paragraphes VI et VII, que le Gouvernement du Reich se considère autorisé à remettre en question le statut politique et territorial de l'Europe tel qu'il résulte des traités de 1919 auxquels le Reich était partie ou dont il avait reconnu l'effet, sous prétexte que les abandons de territoires, consentis par l'Allemagne en 1919, l'ont été sous la pression de la nécessité?

En particulier, reconnaît-il le Statut de Dantzig, celui de Memel? Reconnait-il et entend-il respecter l'indépendance de l'Autriche avec les caractères que les traités attachent à cette indépendance? Reconnait-il et entend-il respecter comme permanente et inaliénable, l'indépendance des territoires visés à l'article 116 du Traité de Paix?

Le Gouvernement allemand conteste-t-il l'obligation de respecter les engagements antérieurement contractés par l'Allemagne et qu'aucun accord ultérieur n'est venu abroger?

3. Le Gouvernement allemand prétend-il pouvoir s'autoriser à l'avenir de ce qu'il appelle le 'droit vital' du peuple allemand pour décréter l'annulation unilatérale d'autres engagements qu'il a pu ou qu'il pourrait contracter?

4. Le Gouvernement allemand admet-il que l'observation des traités de non-agression qu'il préconise puisse être garantie par des accords conclus sur des bases d'assistance mutuelle?

5. En proposant (XXI, 19°) la constitution d'une cour internationale d'arbitrage compétente en ce qui concerne le respect des divers accords qui seraient conclus, le Gouvernement allemand entend-il exclure, à l'égard de ces accords, toute compétence du Conseil de la Société des Nations et de la Cour permanente de Justice internationale?

¹ *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 103 also prints the thirteen French questions and states that they were flown to London on the afternoon of April 22.

6. Pourquoi le Gouvernement allemand n'envisage-t-il plus de conclure un traité de non-agression avec l'U.R.S.S., alors qu'il y a un an il se déclarait prêt à le faire, même si des accords d'assistance mutuelle interviennent entre le Gouvernement soviétique et d'autres Gouvernements?

7. Le Gouvernement allemand entend-il décliner, à l'avenir, la compétence de la Cour permanente de Justice internationale? En particulier, entend-il ne pas renouveler l'adhésion qu'il a donnée à la clause facultative (article 36) du statut de la cour? Entend-il remettre en question les traités d'arbitrage, de conciliation et de règlement judiciaire par lui souscrits ainsi que les clauses spéciales de cet ordre inscrites dans les traités auxquels il est partie?

8. Faut-il conclure de la théorie développée dans le paragraphe XII du mémorandum allemand que le Gouvernement du Reich se réserve, à l'avenir, le droit d'appliquer les mêmes principes et que, par conséquent, il suffit qu'à son avis une mesure par lui prise l'ait été pour la sécurité du Reich, qu'elle n'intéresse que le territoire allemand et qu'elle ne constitue de menace pour personne, pour que le Gouvernement allemand s'estime en droit de se soustraire à toute appréciation de la part d'une juridiction internationale, compétente cependant, aux termes des traités?

9. Comment le Gouvernement allemand entend-il voir régler ce qu'il appelle la question de l'égalité des droits dans le domaine colonial?

10. Qu'entend exactement le Gouvernement allemand par séparation entre le Pacte de la Société des Nations et le cadre du Traité de Versailles?

11. Le Gouvernement allemand admet-il que le Pacte aérien occidental dont il envisage la négociation puisse être complété par des accords bilatéraux d'application?

12. Le Gouvernement allemand admet-il qu'une limitation quantitative et qualitative, ou seulement l'une ou l'autre de ces limitations, puisse intervenir pour les armements aériens en même temps que serait conclu le pacte aérien?

13. D'une manière générale, est-il dans les intentions du Gouvernement allemand de collaborer à la recherche d'une limitation générale, tant qualitative que quantitative, des armements avec les modalités corrélatives de contrôle international qui ont été élaborées à la Conférence du Désarmement?

*Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Sargent
(Received April 28)*

[C 3209/4/18]

BERLIN, April 23, 1936

My dear Sargent,

My letter of April 15th.¹

From another and good source I hear that Hoesch's report to his Government about the end of March was even more pessimistic than François-Poncet told me. It seems that Hoesch wrote that Germany would make a big mistake if she counted in any way upon gaining the friendship of Great Britain. That country was, despite superficial appearances to the contrary, more inflexibly opposed to Germany's aims than even France or Russia. She only differed from France as to the methods to be employed to keep Germany down. Germany should try and reach an arrangement with France direct and not allow British meddling at every stage as she had done in the past.

I hear this report angered² not only Hitler, but even the Wilhelmstrasse, and that if Hoesch had survived he would not have been German Ambassador much longer.

I am reporting by despatch on the funeral at Dresden on Saturday.³ The whole town seemed to have turned out to view it and the streets and cemetery were lined with unfortunate S.S., S.A., police and troops, not to mention Hitlerjugend, all of whose faces were blue with cold, as the day was icy. François-Poncet's theory is that we, by giving Hoesch such a wonderful 'despedida', forced the Nazis' hands, as they felt they could not be outdone by us.⁴

Some Germans told a member of the Embassy that they felt sure we had paid special honour to Hoesch in order to annoy Ribbentrop.

Paul Scheffer's⁵ candidate for London is Weizsäcker, the German Minister at Berne, but I know that some months ago there was a strong push made to send the Prince of Wied from Stockholm and to dislodge Hoesch, the idea being that he and his charming and very 'hochgeboren' wife would easily pocket Mayfair: doubts were felt, however, as to his brains, and those doubts presumably still subsist.

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

¹ No. 241.

² *Note in original:* Conwell Evans in yesterday's 'News Chronicle' writes: 'the German Chancellor stated to me that he had chosen Ribbentrop because the latter had made it his life task to bring about reconciliation between France & Germany thro' Britain's mediation'.

³ April 18.

⁴ The funeral arrangements in England on April 15, including nineteen gun salutes in Hyde Park and at Dover, are described in *The Times* of April 15, 1936, p. 13.

⁵ Herr Scheffer was a prominent German journalist writing for the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

Letter from Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Sargent
(Received April 27)
[C 3178/97/18]

PARIS, April 24, 1936

Dear Sargent,

I am sorry to have been so long in replying to your letter of April 15th¹ (C 2948/97/18) in which you asked for some indication as to any ideas which the French authorities may have regarding the suggestions for economic peace contained in the French memorandum of April 8th.² But as Perowne explained to Baxter in his letter of April 16th¹ not only my Commercial Counsellor but also the principal French officials concerned were away at the time your letter arrived so that it has not been possible to let you have anything definite before this.

Both Cahill and Rowe-Dutton³ have now had an opportunity to raise this point, in the course of unofficial conversation with their friends at the Ministries of Commerce and Finance.

After a conversation of about 45 minutes on April 22nd with the Director of Commercial Agreements and his chief assistant, on the subject of coal (see on this copy of letter from Cahill to Sir Alfred Faulkner which is being forwarded to-day to Wigram),¹ Cahill enquired whether they had given much consideration to the economic peace proposals sketched in the French plan, and received a most jocular and hilarious rejoinder to the effect that they knew nothing about them, and that the whole thing was an 'élucubration' by M. Flandin, who had never consulted anyone concerned with regard to them. Of their own accord Bonnefon-Craponne and his assistant then proceeded to refer to the insubstantiality, incongruity and inconsistency of the proposals. Likewise of their own accord they went on to raise the point about raw materials and colonial markets and asked how the existing French policy (which it was the intention at present to continue) of binding the metropolitan economy ever closer to the colonial economy could be reconciled to any but a negligible extent with the opening of French colonial markets to other countries as a general proposition.

They also asked what substance there could possibly be in a preferential system applicable to inter-European exchanges? The western countries—England, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and, for the last 15 years, Italy—were all competitors, mainly in the same kinds of goods. They had practically all become most highly protectionist, by means either of duties, quotas or currency restrictions, while as regards their agriculture (and that applied especially in the case of France) they were practically all determined to protect it with might and main. The non-highly industrialised countries in

¹ Not printed.

² See Introductory Note to Chapter III.

³ Sir J. R. Cahill was Commercial Counsellor, and Mr. E. Rowe-Dutton was Financial Adviser in H.M. Embassy at Paris.

Europe were of course mainly exporters of agricultural products, yet the last few years had demonstrated clearly enough how extraordinarily difficult it was to bring about preferential agreements, even on a limited scale, between such mainly agricultural countries and the mainly industrial entities.

Cahill's talk at the Ministry of Commerce on the subject of economic peace lasted perhaps five minutes, but the two French officials managed to concentrate into this brief space such an avalanche of arguments against, and such intense scepticism regarding, the French plan, (quite apart from their immediate declaration that the 'economic peace' was solely an 'élucubration du cerveau de M. Flandin',) that Cahill feels absolutely convinced that the economic section of the memorandum can be regarded as nothing more than 'words, words, words', where France is concerned.

Rowe-Dutton saw Rueff⁴ on April 21st and in the course of a general conversation sought his views on the French plan insofar as it deals with economic matters.

Rueff made it abundantly clear that so far at least as he is concerned, he attaches very little value indeed to the vague suggestions contained in the French memorandum. He said that they were not the work of technical experts and that he himself had in fact not been aware of the nature of the suggestions which were being put forward. Although the general lines of the policy were 'interesting' and of a nature to command wide support, the actual putting of them into practice would, he was sure, meet with enormous if not insuperable difficulties. In view of Rueff's reaction Rowe-Dutton felt that it was unnecessary to go further into the question and he allowed the subject to drop with an expression of his general agreement in Rueff's appreciation of the difficulties of acting in practice on the lines indicated.

I think it is clear from the information obtained by Cahill and Rowe-Dutton that the economic part of the French plan is not taken very seriously in official circles here. On the other hand, as Rueff said to Rowe-Dutton, the general lines of the policy indicated are 'interesting' and were indeed the subject of much more favourable comment in the press when the plan was first published than the political parts of the same document. Rowe-Dutton suggests that, in framing his 'élucubrations' M. Flandin may not have been unmindful of their effect on Mr. Cordell Hull, whose attitude is set out in the memorandum annexed to Foreign Office despatch to Washington No. 337 of the 7th April, 1936,¹ but he did not think it desirable to make this point with Rueff. Meanwhile, it seems too early to attempt to forecast whether anything more will be done to press these proposals on public attention (e.g. after the elections).

Yours ever,

GEORGE R. CLERK

⁴ M. Jacques Rueff, of the Ministry of Finance, had been a financial adviser to M. Laval in 1935.

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on Germany

[C 3297/4/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 25, 1936

I circulate to my colleagues two important despatches from Sir Eric Phipps.

In No. 373² I would particularly draw attention to paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, which show that the youth of Germany is being imbued with the idea of expansion both east and west. The position is well summed up by the quotation from Herr Streicher given in the final sentence of the despatch.

Paragraph 9 of No. 384³ indicates that there is really no moderate party in Germany (any more than there is in Japan). I think it is true to say that in both countries there are two sets of people who wish to arrive at the same end at different rates.

Paragraph 13 of this despatch confirms the often expressed apprehension that Germany favours the bilateral as opposed to the multilateral (League) system of treaties, because it would obviously suit her book if a conflict between herself and a small State were localised.

These despatches present a gloomy view of the future for Europe. I fear that any rosier view would be illusory. They will not, of course, make any difference to our intention to probe and explore Herr Hitler's offers and to construct, if possible, something reliable out of them.

But we should not be under any illusion as to the aims that underlie German policy. The Germany of to-day (and, I fear, of to-morrow, in view of the forces of miseducation which are perverting her youth) has no intention of respecting the integrity of her smaller neighbours, no matter what papers she may sign. There will always be the mental reservation that national interests override treaty obligations.

We must, I submit, shape our policy and preparations according to facts, however hard and unpleasant, to which we cannot close our eyes, and at the same time endeavour to educate our own public to a realisation of these facts. The Abyssinian dispute can only accelerate the speed of events, and

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 121(36); it came before the Cabinet on April 29.

² Of April 7 (C 7842/4/18), not printed. It consisted mainly of quotations from speeches by Herr Hitler on March 7, 1936 and May 21, 1935, together with some extracts from a book, *Hitler Jugend im Dienst*, issued by the Central Office of the Hitler Youth Organization. It included passages such as: 'The Dictate of Versailles has torn from the motherland completely German territory, Alsace-Lorraine, West Prussia, Memelland, Upper Silesia, etc. . . The German Reich can in its present situation only lend limited assistance to its Germans abroad.' The final paragraph of the despatch was as follows. '8. Herr Streicher, speaking during the recent election campaign to enemies or luke-warm supporters of the Government, made a significantly true statement when he said: "when this day is over (i.e. Election Day), you may as far as I am concerned quietly bleat. It is a fact, the German, no matter what happens, never is and never will be satisfied".'

³ No. 228.

it seems to me more than ever necessary to do all we can to increase the tempo of our own re-equipment.

A. E.

No. 273

Minute by Sir R. Vansittart on the position of sanctions and the possibility of effectively closing the Suez Canal to Italian shipping

[J 5034/216/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 25, 1936

I do not think it is of any use at this stage to write of closing the Canal.¹ It is highly improbable that the Government would consider it, and a very serious situation would certainly be created for the Government in the country, particularly if the war (for of course it would lead to war) did not go well in the opening stages. There would have been a great deal to be said for closing the Canal at the very beginning of this unhappy affair. But we were not in a position to do so, and even now it would mean taking great risks. The reason we were not in a position to do so is that for fifteen years we have starved our fighting services and made a virtue of it. We cannot behave as if those fifteen years had not been, nor can we regard the present stage of re-equipment as having gone far enough to justify so forward a policy. It is a case of *Delicta majorum immeritus lues*, and it is certainly hard on us in the Foreign Office, who have been foremost in urging re-equipment, that we should be expected to carry out a forward policy on backward preparations.

The criticism of backwardness applies however not only to us but to every Member of the League of Nations, and to none more than to the Mediterranean States. Two of them at least are completely impotent, and two of the others are glaringly ill-equipped in many respects. The fifth, France, has also been guilty of great neglect, particularly in the air, and her collaboration in a war with Italy would not have the full value that we should be entitled to

¹ Sir R. Vansittart was here commenting on a paper of April 24 entitled 'Considerations relative to our attitude at the May session of the Council', signed by Messrs. O. O'Malley, M. Peterson, and W. Strang. The paper first sketched the consequences of failure 'to deprive Mussolini of the full fruits of aggression'. The result would be to destroy the sentiment 'widely and strongly, even if vaguely, entertained' by the ordinary elector 'that the Covenant is primarily the means by which war may be made unprofitable and unlikely'. The 'prestige and influence of His Majesty's Government will also gravely suffer'. These sinister developments could only be prevented 'if the prospect be opened at the May Council of recourse to radical measures against Italy such as a denial to Italy of the use of the Canal'. The threat should not be carried out unless France and the sanctionist powers were prepared to offer backing and assistance. If the proposal failed through a French veto, then the British Government 'would be better off than if this proposal had never been put forward at all' and would 'be entitled to some extent to disclaim British responsibility for the failure of collective action'. The argument that Germany and Italy might be driven into each other's arms and that British naval strength would be decisively weakened was questioned.

expect, even if the will were there. In all our cases, as is inevitable in human nature and affairs, weakness breeds a certain irresolution.

All these points have to be borne in mind, because behind this immediate emergency, whatever form it took in its first stages, there does undoubtedly lie the danger, indeed probability, of a far wider conflagration. To this we simply cannot and must not shut our eyes, though here again the risk might have been run if we had started our own re-equipment when Hitler first came into power, that is three years ago.

I have already suggested what seems to me the best course to follow in our present difficulties; that is the maintenance of existing sanctions, and the extension of financial or armament facilities to Abyssinia. If we cannot carry the League with us in that, and I understand it is doubtful, I should see little hope of its following us effectively into a war. If that were the case, so far from doing the League a service by giving to it a lead from which it would be likely to shrink or in which it would inadequately participate, we might well only do it further harm.

While I regard the suggestions of Mr. Peterson, Mr. O'Malley and Mr. Strang as impracticable at this stage, I have great sympathy with them, in the sense that it is the sort of remedy that I should have liked to have applied at a far earlier stage had it been possible. Incidentally, if we had not let ourselves go so far down-hill we should never have had any trouble at all either with the Italians or with the French, and we should have been far less anxious about Germany. Now I fear that we must look forward to the utmost trouble with Italy in Africa even if not in Europe, besides the exasperation of seeing her profit too much in her present criminal proceedings. But unpleasant as that prospect is, the danger of setting fire to a fuse in the powder barrel of Europe is surely far greater, and indeed incalculable. The danger of such a general conflagration is of course greater now than last autumn, since Germany's strength and audacity have grown, and former associates have fallen further apart. If the cause of such a conflagration could be laid at the door of the League we might be doing it a final disservice.

I should add that the conclusion of the present memorandum, as to our proper policy, is not concurred in by an important body of opinion in the Foreign Office, including Sir L. Oliphant, Mr. Sargent, Mr. Leeper and Mr. Wigram. I believe that another memorandum,² drawing different

² This 'counter memorandum' was dated April 28 and was signed by Sir V. Wellesley, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in addition to the four authors named. An appended note said that Mr. Sargent was on leave but was known to share the same views. The memorandum controverted the arguments of the original paper on almost every point. It did not consider the closing of the Canal the right way to maintain the prestige of the League in view of the serious risks, not only of war with Italy but also of a general conflagration. It questioned the assumption as to the reaction of public opinion towards the Covenant. While recognizing the blow that an Italian victory over Ethiopia would deal to British prestige, it argued that the restoration of this prestige abroad would ultimately depend on the rapidity of the execution of the government's own rearmament programme. It disagreed with the manner in which the possibility of French opposition was disposed of. It considered that the proposal, while provocative and therefore dangerous, was unlikely to have any serious effect on the continuance of the present Italian action. It did not consider

conclusions is to be submitted on Monday.³ The Secretary of State will no doubt wish to consider the two memoranda together when the second is available.

To sum up the substance of the present memorandum, the heart speaks for it and the head against it.

R. V.

the argument about the improbability of a combination of Italy and Germany to be conclusive. And among a number of other objections it considered the view 'that we should fight Italy in order to be able to raise our armaments more quickly to the German level' not to be valid. Mr. Sargent elaborated his criticisms of the original paper in a memorandum of his own of May 4, which contained, according to a comment by Sir R. Vansittart on the same day, 'a lot of pungent realism' (R 2877/226/22).

³ April 27.

No. 274

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on the present position of negotiations for an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty

[J 3548/2/16]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, April [25] 1936

1. The original instructions for Sir Miles Lampson² laid down three alternative proposals which he was to make to the Egyptian Government: the

¹ This document, drafted by Mr. R. I. Campbell, head of the Egyptian Department of the Foreign Office, was completed on April 24. Paragraphs 18–20 were drafted by Mr. W. E. Beckett, Assistant Legal Adviser in the Foreign Office. Mr. Eden approved the draft with slight amendment on April 25. It was circulated to the C.I.D. as paper 1232-B on April 27 and to the Cabinet as C.P. 112(36) on April 29.

² These were contained in telegram No. 94 of February 20, 1936, to Sir M. Lampson, British High Commissioner in Egypt. Treaty negotiations between Great Britain and Egypt had broken down in 1930 over the question of the administration of the Sudan (cf. Cmd. 3575, *Egypt No. 1* (1930)). When in December 1935 the course of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute had underlined the vulnerability of Egypt's position and the Suez Canal a group of leaders of the important parties including the Wafd (a nationalistic party taking its name from the delegation which went to Paris in 1919 to voice Egyptian grievances) proposed the resumption of treaty negotiations. The group, which called itself the United Front, suggested the partial agreement reached in 1930 as the starting point, and stressed the traditionally close relations between the two countries. On January 16, 1936, in telegram No. 25 to Cairo, Mr. Eden accepted Sir M. Lampson's recommendation for the speedy commencement of negotiations, and proposed as a first step in view of the urgency of the situation the negotiation of a military agreement 'confidentially and as potential allies'. The Egyptians would have preferred to adopt the 1930 draft almost without alteration, but this was not acceptable to the British Government, particularly in view of the changed military situation. Nevertheless, Egyptian anxiety for the reopening of negotiations continued. The Prime Minister, Nisim Pasha, resigned on January 21; Nahas Pasha, leader of the Wafd, refused to form a government but agreed to head the Egyptian delegation in the treaty talks. A 'neutral' government under Aly Maher Pasha was formed. On February 13, on the Egyptian initiative, an exchange of notes between the two governments expressed the hope that any failure of negotiations would not be allowed to endanger cordial relations.

first represented the maximum of what His Majesty's Government desired to secure, the third, the minimum which they were prepared to accept. The first proposal, A, was that he should endeavour to obtain Egyptian acceptance of a formula that until such time as Egypt, to the satisfaction of both parties, was in a position herself adequately to assume the protection of her own territory, it should be agreed that the naval, military and air forces of the two parties should be regarded as pooled in the common interest, with the corollary of no limitation as to numbers, dispositions, &c. This formula was to be put forward for exploration and study; and if the High Commissioner was satisfied that the Egyptian mood was unreceptive, he was to proceed to the second stage in such a way that the concession it involved should not lose the advantages it might confer by having the character of a spontaneous and goodwill offer.

The second stage, B, involved the evacuation of the Citadel and Kasr-el-Nil barracks by the British troops in Cairo and their withdrawal to Abbassia and Helmia in the suburbs of the city, British troops being, however, maintained at or near Alexandria and in the Canal Zone. If this proposal proved unacceptable in its turn, Sir Miles Lampson should propose the evacuation by the British troops of Cairo itself and the suburbs of Abbassia and Helmia and their withdrawal to Helouan, some fifteen miles to the South. In this case, too, British troops remain at or near Alexandria and in the Canal Zone. This proposal, however, which His Majesty's Government did not view with any great favour, was not to be put forward without prior reference in good time to His Majesty's Government.

2. When the negotiations began on the 9th March, it soon became clear that the Egyptians were not viewing the problem in a realistic light, and that, in spite of arguments demonstrating that Italian action had produced a military situation far different from that prevailing at the time of the last negotiations in 1930 and that it was fraught with considerable danger to Egypt, they would not accept the idea of the pooling of British and Egyptian resources for the joint defence of Egypt. This attitude seems to have been due partly to a difficulty in grasping the meaning of the suggestion, but in the course of the discussions it has also become clear that the Egyptian negotiators considered that an arrangement on these lines would entail encroachment on full Egyptian sovereignty, as necessarily meaning more than the association of British with the Egyptian forces and as involving in practice the continued occupation of Egypt by British troops. Their position is that, except in time of war, no sovereign State could accept an equal partnership with an allied army on its own territory.

3. In these circumstances, Sir Miles Lampson proceeded to Stage B. Over this proposal Nahas Pasha made difficulties also. The offer to evacuate Kasr-el-Nil and the Citadel produced no great effect, the reason being, in Sir Miles Lampson's opinion, that this step had been discounted by contemporary discussion in the Egyptian press. Nahas Pasha further argued that retention of British troops at Alexandria was unnecessary, since he was ready to agree to increased numbers for the British forces in the Canal Zone,

to the construction of new and the improvement of existing communications from the Zone across the Delta to the West, to the provision of such landing grounds, &c., in the Western Desert as were necessary for the Royal Air Force, and to the execution of all the above to the satisfaction of the British Military Mission which would be invited to Egypt as a result of the treaty.

4. Discussions on these offers, which were made on the 19th March, have been proceeding ever since, and have developed on the whole in an unexpectedly satisfactory manner. Further reference will be made to them below. In commenting on his conversation on the 19th March,³ Sir Miles Lampson expressed the tentative opinion (i) that it might be possible to secure an acceptable arrangement as regards the continued presence of British troops at or near Alexandria, though it would be necessary to fight hard for this and success was not certain; (ii) that the Egyptians would definitely refuse to agree to British troops remaining in Cairo or its suburbs, and that if His Majesty's Government insisted on this a break was almost certain; and (iii) that the same might well prove to be the case with regard to the proposal to post the Cairo troops at Helouan.

5. In the course of discussions on the offers mentioned in the preceding paragraph, and as the outcome of certain aspects of them, the proposal under Stage B having proved abortive, Stage C was reached. It became necessary to decide whether Sir Miles Lampson might be authorised to put forward the suggestion contained therein. His Majesty's Government decided that authority might be given to His Majesty's High Commissioner to proceed to Stage C. Meanwhile, Sir Miles Lampson had emphasised his opinion that it would be impossible to secure Egyptian agreement to the stationing of British forces at Helouan, and he advised that, in the light of the satisfactory development of the offers made by Nahas Pasha, it would be well to abandon the Helouan proposal and to close with the advantageous offers of the Egyptians. Since it was necessary to examine these offers and reach decisions upon them, and since it was also necessary for His Majesty's Government to decide whether they were willing to go beyond Stage C (Helouan), which had originally been laid down as their maximum concession, it was impossible at once (even if it should eventually prove possible) to authorise the High Commissioner to accept Nahas Pasha's proposals and to inform him whether or not insistence on Helouan would still be necessary. In case, however, it might be in any way helpful to him in preserving the satisfactory atmosphere of the discussions and in securing the further satisfactory development of Nahas Pasha's offers, he was informed that he could, at the moment he considered opportune, foreshadow the readiness of His Majesty's Government to evacuate Abbassia and Helmia in favour of Helouan. It should perhaps here be pointed out that two meetings between the British and Egyptian delegations were being held weekly, that any break or deadlock was highly undesirable and that it was necessary to keep Nahas Pasha in play in respect of his proposals.

6. On the receipt of Sir Miles Lampson's first intimation that it might be

³ In Cairo telegram No. 233 of March 20 (J 2471/2/16), not printed.

impossible to secure Egyptian agreement to the proposal regarding Helouan (Stage C), the Chiefs of Staff had considered the matter and prepared a report (C.I.D. Paper No. 1225-B of the 1st April, 1936),⁴ which, indeed, envisaged the possibility of entirely evacuating the Cairo area (on condition that British troops remained in the Canal Zone and that a larger British garrison was stationed at Alexandria) if such action were considered necessary on political grounds for the purpose of securing a treaty, but which also pointed out the military disadvantages inherent in such action (C.I.D. Paper No. 1225-B, Secret, of the 1st April, 1936). Upon this, in view of later developments with regard to Nahas Pasha's offers, I wrote a letter⁵ to the Committee of Imperial Defence, stating that, in my opinion, it would be politically desirable for His Majesty's Government to abandon insistence on the location of a British garrison at Helouan, in spite of the military disadvantages entailed by such a move, as set out by the Chiefs of Staff in their report. In doing so, attention was called to the views of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief in Egypt,⁶ as reported in Sir Miles Lampson's telegram No. 28, Saving, of the 2nd April.⁷ These were as follows:

'2. *Cairo.*

(a) Affords a better place for a mobile reserve than anywhere else in Egypt, but, provided communications are improved, the difference in time of movement between having a mobile reserve in Cairo or having it in the Canal Zone would only be a matter of hours.

(b) With the increased speed of movement due to the development of mechanisation, it seems less necessary now to keep forces in Cairo to quell internal unrest. We don't want our Army to act as a police reserve and to be called upon frequently, but only to come if rioting is developing to insurrection.

(c) Provided we retain our Headquarters in Cairo and have a strong British mission with the Egyptian Army, we ought to be able to keep in touch with the internal situation, and to know whether any revolts were being hatched in the Army.

(d) *Deduction.* The real risk of removing British troops from Cairo is the difficulty of establishing a base and recovering control of all means of communication with a really hostile Egyptian Government in power.

But if an agreed treaty is considered of the greatest importance and negotiations are likely to break down over the question, such a risk would have to be accepted. An agreed treaty renders the probability of a really hostile Egypt more remote.'

I understand that this matter has still to be discussed by the Committee of Imperial Defence, after which a decision by His Majesty's Government will be necessary.

⁴ Filed at J 2764/2/16.

⁵ Dated April 15 (J 2939/2/16), not printed.

⁶ General Sir George Weir.

⁷ A copy of this telegram was attached to Mr. Eden's letter of April 15 to the C.I.D. (see note 5) and was circulated at the C.I.D. meeting of April 27.

7. It will be observed that as regards the three stages laid down in the original instructions sent to His Majesty's High Commissioner, Stage C has already been reached and that the possibility of moving beyond Stage C is under consideration.

8. But I should like to point out that the conversations have been developing in such a way that to proceed beyond Stage C does not necessarily involve the abandonment of a position considered essential by His Majesty's Government, or at any rate its abandonment without compensating and counter-vailing advantages in other directions. It does not necessarily mean that His Majesty's Government will have embarked on a facile descent, but rather that they may be able to reach their objective by another route.

9. The offers made by Nahas Pasha referred to above, and the point reached in respect of them may now be examined.

10. The offers which Nahas Pasha had made as stated above were: (1) road and rail communications provided to the satisfaction of His Majesty's Government; (2) an increased number of British troops in the Canal Zone; (3) air facilities in the Western Desert; and (4) compliance in these and other matters with the advice of a British Military Mission. He accompanied these proposals with the statement that the British forces could stay in their present position until the international crisis came to an end, and with the reminder that, in any case, they would stay where they were until alternative accommodation was provided for them in the Canal Zone, which must take several years. These proposals contemplated, as will be seen, the evacuation of Cairo and also of Alexandria at a time which would be dependent on the state of affairs in Europe and the period required for the provision of new barracks in the Canal Zone, and not on the time at which, to the mutual satisfaction of both parties, the Egyptian army might be in an adequate state of efficiency to take over from the British army responsibility for the defence of those cities. The questions of the continued occupation of Cairo and Alexandria were discussed at separate times during the discussions. The position reached as regards Cairo has been dealt with above, but it might be added here that Nahas Pasha has definitely stated (on the 16th April), with regard to the proposal to station troops at Helouan in substitution for Cairo, that the Egyptian people would never be able to understand or acquiesce in the change of site, which they would regard as an even more pronounced form of perpetuation of the present occupation. Rather than that he would, indeed, prefer that the British forces should stay where they were pending the fulfilment of the conditions just mentioned. Sir Miles Lampson gave the Pasha no encouragement to think that His Majesty's Government would yield on this point, but has recommended to me that the proposal under Stage C should be abandoned since among other reasons the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief regarded Helouan as unsuitable for the requirements of the Royal Air Force.⁸

⁸ Mr. Campbell's original draft here continued: 'and also because, since British troops would only remain in Helouan until the Egyptian troops were fit to take over, two alternative sets of barrack construction would have to be undertaken and paid for by the Egyptian

11. In the discussions with regard to Alexandria, Nahas Pasha has so far maintained his objections to the retention of a British garrison in that City. He has maintained that, with increased forces in the Canal Zone and improved East-West connexions, His Majesty's Government would have all they could reasonably require, and that Egyptian forces in Alexandria, even if not properly trained, could hold the position adequately at Alexandria and in the Western desert for the short period required and until the arrival of British reinforcements from the Canal, should they be necessary. From the discussions regarding Alexandria emerged the fact that the difficulty was to define the period for its evacuation by British troops. The Egyptians cannot admit that this could be dependent upon a Clause to the effect that both sides were satisfied that Egyptian troops were sufficiently trained and equipped to take over. This would be interpreted generally in Egypt as a loophole for enabling British troops to stay in any given locality regardless of time-limit on the pretext that the Egyptian troops were not yet fit to take over. The question remains at this point and efforts are being made to find means of meeting this difficulty. Sir Miles Lampson has been asked whether, in his opinion, the Egyptians might agree to a provision stating that the British troops would remain until the Egyptian Army was fit to take over (no mention being made as to the necessity of the mutual satisfaction of both parties on this point), any dispute on the subject being left for settlement under a general dispute clause. Sir Miles Lampson has replied that it is possible, though by no means certain, that Nahas Pasha would agree to this. It has also been proposed that, as a result of the total evacuation of the Cairo area, Nahas Pasha might be persuaded to agree to the inclusion of the phrase 'to the mutual satisfaction of both parties' on the ground that the concession over Cairo would enable him to take Egyptian public opinion with him.

12. The discussions on the offers of Nahas have produced from him proposals as regards training facilities for the Army, which, I understand, offer fair prospects of satisfying the requirements of the War Office. They include an offer of more extensive areas for training. There is a provision by which the troops in the Canal Zone will be enabled at specified periods of the year to cross the Delta and train in the Western Desert. Besides the new and improved communications from East to West, which he originally suggested, Nahas Pasha is ready also to improve communications running North-West, North-East, East and possibly also South from Cairo.

13. Facilities for the Air Force, which the Pasha has so far suggested, though in a considerable measure satisfactory, are, it is understood, not yet considered entirely to fulfil the requirements of the Air Ministry. There is,

Government, one at Helouan and another in the Canal Zone, when the troops finally withdrew there'. Mr. Eden minuted: 'But this was not our original idea. Helouan was to be permanent.' Sir R. Vansittart added (April 27): 'Nothing was said to this effect in our original instructions and in Foreign Office telegram No. 181 of April 7, para. 2 the H[igh] C[ommissioner] was told that his instructions did not conceal an intention on the part of His Majesty's Government to remain in permanent occupation of Alexandria (and Cairo).'

however, reason to hope that it will be possible to secure our full desiderata so long as wording can be found which will not offend the Egyptian *amour-propre* on the question of sovereignty. Nahas Pasha seems ready to furnish His Majesty's Government with all that they require in this respect.

14. The question of access to Egyptian Ports has so far caused a certain amount of difficulty. In the Draft Treaty of 1930 (Article 8) Egypt was to afford to this country in the event of war or imminent menace of war, amongst other things, the use of her ports. It is now desired to secure the right to use Egyptian ports in the event of 'an apprehended emergency.' Nahas has shown suspicion of the motives of His Majesty's Government in putting forward this proposal, and has suggested that it would be sufficient in case of an apprehended emergency for His Majesty's Government to despatch the Royal Navy to Egyptian ports as a matter of course in the manner in which they are accustomed to do now. After arrival the apprehended emergency would be explained, and the necessary facilities and permission to remain would be accorded. This does not meet our requirements and methods of settling the difficulty are under discussion. One of these would be to insert in the Article of the treaty under which Egypt promises to come to the aid of this country as an ally, and to accord all the facilities in her power, including the use of her ports in the event of war or imminent menace of war, a phrase to cover 'an apprehended emergency'.

15. But the most important offer made by Nahas Pasha is that he has agreed to a formula according to which (a) the normal peace time British garrison in Egypt would be (1) up to 10,000 land troops; (2) 400 pilots and ancillary personnel for administrative and technical duties, with (b) a right on the part of His Majesty's Government to reinforce without limit in the case of apprehended emergency and before a state of acute crisis is reached. I understand that the figures here mentioned meet the requirements of the War Office and the Air Ministry respectively, while the right of reinforcement meets the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff as set down in paragraph 39(i)(a) of their report of the 5th February, 1936 (see C.P. 25(36)).⁹ I should add here that it will no doubt be considered necessary to find means of ensuring that His Majesty's Government are left the judges of what constitutes an 'apprehended emergency.'

16. While, therefore, His Majesty's Government have been unable to secure acceptance of their proposals under stages A, B and C of their original instructions to His Majesty's High Commissioner, they have in other directions secured offers from the leader of the Egyptian delegation which are of considerable value and which in some respects transcend what had been expected.

17. I would recommend that His Majesty's Government should decide not to insist upon the stationing of British troops at Helouan in place of Cairo, but that, provided they can secure Egyptian agreement to the retention of the British garrison at Alexandria, that they can reach a satisfactory solution of the question of a time-limit for the maintenance of a garrison at Alexandria,

⁹ Filed at J 1210/2/16.

that they can obtain their requirements with regard to air facilities and army training, and that they can secure that they remain the judges of an apprehended emergency; provided also that they secure Egyptian agreement on another highly important matter with which I deal immediately below, they should agree forthwith to withdraw the British troops from Cairo to the Canal Zone and close with the offers made by Nahas Pasha.

18. Reference has just been made to an important point on which it is necessary to secure the agreement of the Egyptian Government. This point may be referred to generally as our requirements in the matter of the duration of the treaty; this description, however, is not accurate because its military provisions may really be divided into four headings, and there is no *a priori* reason why the duration of all these four classes of provisions should be the same. The four headings are:

- (a) The stationing of British troops in parts of Egypt other than the Canal Zone;
- (b) The stationing of British troops and air forces in the Canal Zone;
- (c) The alliance between Egypt and the United Kingdom, which means that in time of war or emergency Egypt has to place her ports and communications at the disposal of His Majesty's Government; and
- (d) The recognition of the right of His Majesty's Government (possibly not to the exclusion of Egypt possessing a similar right) to protect the Canal (i.e., to exercise the rôle which, under article 9 of the Suez Canal Convention, is accorded to Egypt and Turkey).

In previous draft treaties (d) was left to be assumed, but a recent more exhaustive examination of the legal position has led to the conclusion that it would not be safe to leave this position to be assumed, and the Chiefs of Staff in their report of the 9th April (C.I.D. Paper No. 1228-B)¹⁰ have put it forward as their views that the most essential provision for the treaty to contain is one by which Egypt recognises that His Britannic Majesty possessed right (d) antecedently to the treaty and shall possess it in perpetuity.

19. As already stated, point (d) having not been covered by any express provision in the 1930 or 1933 draft treaties, and point (a) not being a requirement which was inserted in those drafts at all, the duration of the treaty in the 1930 and 1933 drafts really meant the duration of provisions (b) and (c). Sir Miles Lampson has repeatedly stated his view that he considers there is no chance whatever of the negotiations being successful unless the treaty contains some time limit (i.e., he is referring here to a time limit to provisions (b) and (c)), that is to say, a clause under which these provisions go on for a certain number of years as a minimum, but that after the expiry of the minimum period a third party (e.g., such as the Council of the League of Nations) is to decide in case of disagreement between the contracting parties whether these provisions are to continue unchanged, and, if not, in what manner they are to be revised.

20. As regards point (d) and the view of the Chiefs of Staff, it is necessary,

¹⁰ Filed at J 3236/2/16.

I think, that it should be realised (1) that a treaty provision carrying out the Chiefs of Staff's suggestion in the clearest and most obvious words would stand no chance of being accepted by the Egyptian negotiators, and (2) that His Majesty's Government's present claim to possess this right does not rest legally upon an absolutely secure basis. At the present moment His Majesty's Government have for the rights which they claim merely a good arguable case. In a letter addressed to the Admiralty, War office and Air Ministry I have suggested what I considered to be the best method of dealing with this matter. Briefly, my suggestions are (i) that there should be in the body of the treaty a sentence to the effect that Egypt, recognising His Britannic Majesty's position in relation to the Suez Canal, recognises that he may, through the Commanders of his forces in Egypt, take such measures as are necessary for the protection of the Canal, and (ii) at the end of the treaty the duration article dealing with points (b) and (c) should state that these provisions go on for a minimum of x years and that after this period they may be replaced by other provisions, but that these provisions must provide for the position of His Britannic Majesty in relation to the Suez Canal and the safety of His Britannic Majesty's imperial communications. The effect of these provisions would be that, even if a third party at the end of the minimum period had to decide in case of disagreement how the treaty was to be revised, it must be already accepted as a basis for the new treaty that it must provide for His Britannic Majesty's right to protect the Canal and those provisions must be such as to render British imperial communications secure, though the particular provisions of points (a), (b) and (c) might be altered. As regards (d) these suggestions in my view entirely meet the requirements put forward by the Chiefs of Staff.¹¹

21. The text of the letter to the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry, referred to above, is annexed.¹²

¹¹ At the C.I.D. meeting of April 27 it was concluded that (a) the retention of a British garrison on the Suez Canal and at or near Alexandria was essential, (b) if this were agreed, the retention of troops in Cairo need not be insisted upon, and (c) the question of a time limit for the British garrisons should be considered by the Cabinet. On April 29 the Cabinet approved conclusions (a) and (b) and agreed that the Secretary of State should try and find a way to ensure that the question raised in (c) was not submitted to any third party for decision.

¹² Not printed.

No. 275

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Mr. Eden (Received April 26, 2.45 p.m.)

No. 22 Telegraphic [C 3168/4/18]

WARSAW, April 26, 1936, 12.15 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs has expressed to me the hope that if any allusion be made to Eastern Europe in questionnaire to be submitted to

Reich due regard may be shown for susceptibilities of Powers concerned. References in French memorandum to Danzig and Memel had made bad impression in Poland and the Baltic States and His Excellency thought that if this part of Europe is mentioned at all in questionnaire it would be best to consult government in question before doing so.

Monsieur Beck is instructing Polish Ambassador in London to approach you in this sense. His views are of course inspired by well-known Polish thesis but [?that] no action should be taken by Great Powers as regards Eastern Europe without consultation with countries in that region.¹

¹ M. Orlowski, the Polish Chargé d'Affaires, saw Sir R. Vansittart on April 28, and said that with regard to Danzig 'the Poles. . . had already agreements with Germany which they were seeking to solidify. The last thing in the world that the Polish Government would desire would be that anything should be said in our communication to the German Government which would cast doubt on the German intention to live up to their existing obligations in this respect. . . "If the Germans are indeed going to break their word, for goodness sake do not let us make it any easier for them by giving them an opening. On the contrary let us make it as difficult as possible".' Sir R. Vansittart said in reply that Colonel Beck 'might count with confidence on the tact and good sense of His Majesty's Government'.

No. 276

Memorandum by Mr. J. H. U. Lambert¹ on the choice for Italy and England in the Abyssinian War

[R 3335/226/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 27, 1936

Assuming that Italy has now broken the Abyssinian resistance—and there seems no reason to doubt that she has done so—two main alternatives on the plane of high policy lie before her. This memorandum is an attempt to assess which she is likely to choose.

The first alternative for Italy is that she rests content with the conquest of Abyssinia, and spends the next 30 to 50 years—at any rate, the lifetime of the Duce—consolidating and developing it. This is the course forecast by Signor Mussolini himself and by other responsible Italians. It would certainly be the safest course for Italy, and the most comfortable course for everybody else. It would mean that Italy would once more become a 'good European', at any rate from the French point of view, and would join the ranks of the 'haves'—in the Duce's words to Mr. Sandys: 'Nous nous trouuerions avec vous de l'autre côté de la barrière.'²

He would be foolish, however, who in view of past experience trusted to the Duce's or any other Italian's words as a reliable indicator of Italy's

¹ Mr. Lambert was a Second Secretary in the Abyssinian Department of the Foreign Office.

² Mr. Duncan Sandys, M.P., during a visit to Rome, had a conversation with Signor Mussolini on April 14, 1936, of which he sent a memorandum to Sir R. Vansittart on April 22 (J 3518/84/1).

intentions. In September 1934, the Italian Government assured Abyssinia that Italy had no hostile intentions towards her;³ yet Signor Mussolini, in a speech in May 1935, admitted he had 'occupied himself' with the Abyssinian problem since 1925.⁴ The motivator⁵ of Italy's actions abroad is Italy's interests of the moment. What, with Abyssinia's resistance broken, are these likely to be?

The safest course for Italy has already been indicated. But the Duce has never put safety first; quite the reverse. Moreover, in the ever worsening economic and financial condition of Italy, exigencies of internal politics must be paramount. Can he afford to 'bury the eagles and the trumpets beneath some snow-deep Alp'? To what is the attention of his public to be turned when there are no more victories? Public works—the battle of the grain, even—will seem cheap to a people which had tasted the delights of Amba Alagi and Dessie. And where will be the quick return of this Roman triumph? Nowhere, except in a few bereaved families—and in many more families whose sons and daughters will be shipped to Abyssinia to maintain and develop that newly-won 'irredenta'. It will be many years before the Abyssinian colonists begin to send home remittances—and in the meantime there will be loans to be subscribed to for Abyssinian development, and conscriptions of capital in one form or another to underpin Italy's tottering finances.

Almost the only branch of Italian industry which has not suffered from the war has been that of the war industries—iron and steel, engineering and aircraft. Are these too, after the war, to be restricted, and so add to the volume of unemployment? And if not, to what uses are their products to be put? There are a million men under arms in Italy; the arming of that country, except perhaps for aircraft, must be reaching saturation point. The only alternative outlet for arms is—Abyssinia, where five million blacks are ready to receive them as soon as the Italians have so cowed them that there will be no danger of their being turned against Italy.

But, it will be argued, Italy genuinely wants peace, wants to 'return to Europe', wants to wind up the Abyssinian affair as quickly and quietly as possible. True. And there is Hitler on the Brenner—or very nearly. The question will be—where will Italy be driven by events *inside* Italy? It will be the hard-driven Italian people—not Mussolini—who will, directly or indirectly, decide on which side of the 'barrière' Italy will come down.

The internal economy of Italy has been so modified from its original capitalist basis that it can scarcely now be reconstructed in any recognisable form. Yet if the only tangible result of the Abyssinian adventure is to bring about universal impoverishment in Italy under the guise of state socialisation,

³ A joint Italo-Ethiopian *communiqué* of September 29, 1934, stated that the Italian Government took note of the peaceful assurances of the Imperial Government of Ethiopia and affirmed its own intention to cultivate with Ethiopia the most friendly relations. See *The Times*, October 1, 1934, p. 14.

⁴ The reference is presumably to Signor Mussolini's speech to the Italian Senate on May 14, 1935; see *The Times*, May 15, 1935, p. 14.

⁵ An emendation in Sir L. Oliphant's handwriting suggests that this should read 'motive'.

what has been Fascism's mission? Has Fascism in effect done for us—the Italian will ask—anything more than the Communism from which it claims to have saved Italy would have done?

That question—from Mussolini's point of view—must never be asked. Rather than that it should be asked, he is likely to go to all lengths—even to the length of issuing challenges abroad of which he cannot foresee the outcome.

And, in effect, the chances are, for him, not so adverse as might at first sight appear. Even if the worst comes to the worst, and he challenges the British Empire, and goes down—he may retain his life, and win for himself a place in history comparable with that of Napoleon. This is no mean allurements for an Italian, since the Italian mind is histrionically conditioned. But it may not come to the worst. Germany—the other great dissatisfied power—is re-arming. In two years she may be ready. Also in two years, Austria and Hungary, Germanophil states by tradition but which at present stand mid-way between Germany and Italy, may be re-armed to capacity.

Germany, fresh from her memory of the last war, does not trust Italy. But if Italy offered Germany her aid, and Germany could be convinced that Italy was doing this purely from her own (Italian) interests, Germany might accept. For it would mean that Italy's interests would keep Italy on Germany's side.

Whether Germany *would* accept it, cannot be in the province of this memorandum to say. But the mere possibility of such a combination (Italy abandoning, of course, Austria to Germany in exchange for the colonial gains which Italy would share with Germany at British, and perhaps French, expense) is sufficiently appalling.

The chances are that the Duce's wisdom will incline him towards moderation, but that events—chiefly events in Italy—will drive him towards an extreme course. In these circumstances, what is the United Kingdom's course? To take time by the forelock, and conjure or eliminate the evil—or take the fence only when it comes, although so many additions will have been made to it that by that time it will be of astronomical height?

That—and nothing less—is the choice for the United Kingdom to-day.⁶

⁶ Mr. Lambert's paper attracted a wide range of minutes. Mr. Wigram said that he understood Mr. Lambert 'to incline to the view that Italy is going to give us trouble in the future, and that therefore we should be wise to jump on her at once. At that rate we should probably be wise to jump on Germany at once. In the present state of our armaments and of Europe and indeed the Far East, I regard Mr. Lambert's proposal (if I have correctly interpreted it) as quite impracticable and most dangerous. R. F. Wigram. 28/4.' Mr. Eden wrote: 'Mr. Lambert's paper is most interesting. We must not, I think, allow ourselves to think that we *cannot* deal with Italy now in a military sense. That is emphatically not the view of the Admiralty, & never has been mine. The determination of a policy at this time is a matter of the gravest difficulty & importance; nor must we forget that the fact that we are a democracy must play a decisive part . . . I doubt myself whether we shall ever be in a better military position to meet an Italian challenge than we are today, for though we shall be stronger two years hence, so will Germany. A. E. April 29.'

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on questions to be addressed to the German Government

[C 3297/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April [28] 1936²

When the four Locarno Powers last met in Geneva on Good Friday, the 10th April,³ the French claimed with justice that Germany had made no contribution to the restoration of confidence prior to the opening of general negotiations. She had refused to accept the reference to The Hague Court or to give any substantial satisfaction respecting the provisional arrangements in the Rhineland. The French argued, therefore, that the effort of conciliation attempted in the Text of Proposals of the 19th March⁴ had failed; and though they were willing to admit that we should continue our consideration of the German proposals, they asked that, in case the Germans should follow up their reoccupation of the Rhineland by the erection of fortifications, a preliminary study of sanctions should be begun. The French also let it be known that if the Germans fortified the zone they would require some additional 'compensation' which was understood to be particularly some additional security for the States in Central and Eastern Europe, who would be increasingly cut off from the West. The French stated that they regarded our agreement to the General Staff conversations as 'compensation' for the reoccupation of the Rhineland, but not for its fortification, which primarily concerned Central and Eastern Europe.

2. Lord Halifax and I strongly resisted the French view that the attempt at conciliation had failed and that it was time to begin the study of sanctions. We took advantage of the indication that the French were looking for 'compensation' for the fortification of the Rhineland to point out that, on the admission of all of us, the German proposals were far from clear on a number of points; that some of those points, if explained in a satisfactory way, might give the French the very 'compensation' they were looking for; and that therefore the first step was to clear up these doubtful points with the Germans. The French agreed to this and we secured the *communiqué* attached to this memorandum, which stated that 'the representatives of the United Kingdom will get into touch with the German Government for the elucidation of a certain number of points in the German memorandum.'⁵

3. We are then pledged to the French to try to clear up these points with the Germans; and we further agreed in the Geneva *Communiqué* that among these points should be those referred to in one of the French memoranda given us at Geneva.⁶ Since then the French Ambassador has given to

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 123(36).

² No other date is given; the document was circulated to the Cabinet on April 28.

³ See No. 234.

⁴ See No. 144.

⁵ See No. 231.

⁶ See No. 222.

Sir R. Vansittart a note which I think covers the points in which the French are interested.⁷

4. Moreover, our own examination in the Foreign Office of the German memoranda, particularly those of the 24th March⁸ and 31st March⁹ had convinced us that there were therein a number of points which were very equivocal and that it would be essential to clear them up at an early stage. Apart from the fact that to leave them in doubt might expose us to unpleasant surprises in the future, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that what His Majesty's Government is aiming at is a lasting settlement and it is hopeless to expect such a settlement unless we can get the Germans to say beyond all doubt that it is one which will satisfy them.

5. Among the important points in the German memoranda which are not clear are:

- (1) The question whether Germany now regards herself as possessed of 'complete equality,' under which condition only, in her own words, can she conclude 'genuine treaties'.
- (2) The character of the non-aggression pacts proposed by Germany and their relationship with the Covenant of the League of Nations.
- (3) The meaning of the phrases 'colonial equality of rights' and 'the separation of the Covenant of the League of Nations from the Treaty of Versailles.' It is essential to elucidate these as, though they are not described by Germany as conditions of her re-entry into the League of Nations, we could not ourselves support her return there without the certainty that we and she understood these phrases in the same manner.

6. The draft despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin, which is annexed to this memorandum, will show, I think, that it should be possible to discuss these matters with the German Government in a most friendly and courteous manner. But to content ourselves with anything less than complete clarity would be a neglect for which we should rightly be held responsible in future.¹⁰

⁷ See Enclosure in No. 269.

⁸ See No. 163, note 2.

⁹ See Introductory Note to Chapter III.

¹⁰ Mr. Eden reported to the Cabinet on April 22 that in the conversations at Geneva he and Lord Halifax had been successful in securing their main object, namely that there should be no meeting of the Locarno Powers before the French elections, and that in the meantime a series of questions should be addressed to the German Government (cf. Nos. 222, 231, and 234). He hoped to present these to the Cabinet in the near future. He asked his colleagues to consider in the meantime whether it would be advisable for a Cabinet Minister, but not himself, to discuss the questions in Berlin with the German Government. The present memorandum, C.P. 123(36), after being drafted in the Foreign Office was reviewed by Mr. Eden during a weekend with Lord Cranborne in Dorset, and then shown to Mr. Baldwin and to Mr. Chamberlain on April 27. In his memoirs (*op. cit.*, p. 371), Lord Avon remarks that Mr. Chamberlain made no objection. The memorandum was then circulated to the Cabinet late on the evening of April 28, in time for the ordinary weekly meeting of the Cabinet on April 29, when the Cabinet proceeded to a 'preliminary

Draft of a Despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin

Sir,

Your Excellency will have read the memoranda communicated to me by the late Herr von Hoesch, on the 7th March, 1936,¹¹ and by Herr von Ribbentrop on the 24th March and the 1st April, 1936, respecting the reoccupation of the demilitarised zone and the peace proposals of the German Government.

2. Certain of these proposals deal, as your Excellency is aware, with temporary arrangements in the demilitarised zone pending the completion of the first stage of the general negotiations for the peace of Europe which were proposed by the German Government. On these temporary arrangements it is not my purpose to comment in the present despatch, though your Excellency knows that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom regret that the German Government have not been able to make a more substantial contribution towards the re-establishment of the confidence which is such an essential preliminary to the wide negotiations which they have in view.

3. In the course of my interview with Herr von Ribbentrop on the 2nd April, I informed his Excellency that His Majesty's Government regard the proposals for the future in the German memorandum of the 31st March (that communicated to me on the 1st April) as most important and as deserving of careful study. This study is now at an advanced stage; but His Majesty's Government find difficulty in carrying it further without discussing more closely with the German Government (as foreshadowed in the Geneva *communiqué* of the 10th April) a certain number of points in the three memoranda, particularly in those of the 24th and 31st March. His Majesty's Government feel sure that the German Government will share their view that the greatest possible precision is desirable before any general negotiations can open, in order that in the future no misunderstandings may cloud the confident co-operation of the Powers of Europe, which it is the most earnest hope of His Majesty's Government, as they are sure also of the German Government, that the proposed negotiations may advance.

review of their general policy in the new situation that was developing'. An extract from the Cabinet minutes summarizing this discussion is printed as Appendix I(a) to this Volume. Consideration of the memorandum was postponed until the next day, in order to give the Prime Minister and others more time to peruse it. On April 30, at a special meeting at 10 a.m., the Cabinet went through the draft despatch (see Enclosure) paragraph by paragraph, and agreed to a number of modifications of paragraphs 5 to 13, with the general aim of making them less provocative without losing their essential purpose. An extract from the Cabinet minutes relating to this discussion is printed as Appendix I(b) below. For the comments of the Foreign Office officials, who did not like some of the amendments, see No. 283 below. The revised draft was re-examined by the Cabinet at its meeting on May 4, and a copy sent to Sir E. Phipps by air bag via Cologne on the morning of May 5. After further slight alteration of the despatch by the Cabinet on May 6 he was authorized to seek an interview in order to present it to Herr Hitler, who had, however, in the meantime left Berlin. See Nos. 299, 304-7 below.

¹¹ See No. 42, Enclosure.

4. There are a number of passages in the German memoranda of the 24th and 31st March which leave His Majesty's Government in some doubt as to the conception held by the German Government of the basis upon which the future settlement should be founded.

5. The first point on which it is desirable to be clear is whether Germany now regards herself as possessed of that 'complete equality' which, in her own words, is the condition under which alone she can conclude 'genuine treaties.' There are passages in the second sub-paragraph of paragraph 1 of the German Government's memorandum of the 24th March, 1936, which seem to suggest that it is the view of the German Government that by their action in the Rhineland they have fulfilled this condition. On the other hand, there are passages in paragraph 2 of the memorandum of the 24th March which might be capable of a different interpretation. These latter passages may be held to suggest that Germany's 'complete equality' has, in the view of the German Government, not yet been achieved. His Majesty's Government would not themselves wish to draw any such conclusion, but they would be glad to have a clear declaration from the German Government on this point, in order to dissipate any uncertainty which may remain.

6. In so far as the argument set out in paragraph 6 of the German Government's memorandum of the 31st March is intended to be of general application, it might give rise to doubt as to the view which the German Government take of the continued maintenance in force of the remaining operative clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and, indeed, of any agreement, such as the recent Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which might be said to have had its origin in the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. While His Majesty's Government do not wish to enter into controversy with the German Government on this point, they wish to make it clear that they are unable to accept the historical interpretation of events set forth in that paragraph. Their views are embodied in a separate memorandum (see Annex).¹²

7. There is in paragraph 4 of the memorandum of the 31st March a further cause for uncertainty. It is stated in that paragraph that 'the German Government have received from the German People (*Volk*) a solemn general mandate to represent the Reich and the German nation (*nation*)' to carry out a policy which implies the preservation under all circumstances of 'their freedom, their independence and at the same time their equality of status.' A distinction is apparently drawn between the Reich and the German nation. Is any significance to be attached to this distinction, and, if so, what is it? His Majesty's Government assume that both words apply only to populations within the existing frontiers of Germany.

8. From what has been said above, the German Government will, I am sure, appreciate the necessity for a clear definition of their attitude on these important points. There might otherwise be uncertainty as to Germany's attitude towards such questions as the existing territorial or political status of France, Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia and Poland; of Soviet

¹² Not printed. It was omitted from the despatch in its final form. See Appendix I(b) below.

Russia and the Baltic States; of Memel and Danzig (as regards the status of Memel, in particular, the reference to the 'effective development' of 'the guaranteed autonomy of the Memel Territory' in the penultimate paragraph of the German Government's memorandum of the 7th March is not clear); and of Austria, the territorial or political status of all of which to some extent derive from the Treaty of Versailles or were recognised by Germany thereby.

9. I turn now to other matters. Sub-paragraph 13 of paragraph 22 of the memorandum of the 31st March refers to 'the conclusion of an Air Pact to supplement and reinforce these (Western European) security agreements.' In the spring of 1935 the German Government was understood to hold that the negotiation of an Air Pact should not be complicated by an attempt to accompany it by an agreement for the limitation of air forces. Since then a somewhat contradictory position seems to have arisen. In the Reichstag on the 21st May, 1935,¹³ Herr Hitler mentioned the possibility of an agreement for air limitation on the basis of parity between the great Western Powers, provided, so we understood, that the development of the Soviet air force was not such that revision would be necessary. The Chancellor's speech of the 21st May, 1935, was made after the signature of the Franco-Soviet Treaty; yet in December 1935 he informed your Excellency that that Treaty had made air limitation impossible.¹⁴ A decision not to attempt to accompany a Western Air Pact by a regional agreement for limitation of air strengths would be very much regretted by His Majesty's Government; and the statement in paragraph 2 of the German memorandum that the German Government are impressed by the results achieved in the limited sphere of the recent agreement respecting naval armaments encourages them to hope that the German Government will be able to fall in with their views on this point.

10. His Majesty's Government are gratified to see that, in sub-paragraphs 10 and 14 of paragraph 22 of the memorandum of the 31st March, the German Government propose the conclusion of non-aggression pacts between Germany, on the one hand, and France, Belgium and possibly Holland on the other. They note that the German Government are willing that these pacts should be accompanied by treaties of guarantee. The exact form which these instruments will assume must be a matter for detailed negotiation.

His Majesty's Government also note the proposal in sub-paragraph 17 of paragraph 22 for non-aggression pacts between Germany and the States on Germany's south-eastern and north-eastern frontiers. His Majesty's Government would venture to recall the general outline of such pacts given to Sir John Simon by Baron von Neurath in Berlin on the 26th March, 1935.¹⁵ They would be glad to know whether the German Government suggest that these pacts should follow generally that outline, and whether they agree that these pacts also may be guaranteed by mutual assistance arrangements.

The announcement which the German Government have been able to

¹³ See Volume XIII, No. 222, note 1.

¹⁴ See Volume XV, No. 383.

¹⁵ See Volume XII, p. 739.

make of Germany's readiness to re-enter the League of Nations permits His Majesty's Government to assume that no difficulty will arise as regards the conformity of the proposed non-aggression pacts with the obligations of members of the League of Nations, and that the operation of these pacts will take place within the framework of the Covenant.

There are two further points to which attention should be drawn. The first concerns the meaning of the words 'the States on Germany's south-eastern and north-eastern frontiers.' His Majesty's Government cannot but feel that the whole settlement would be very greatly facilitated if the German Government could see their way to interpret these words so as to cover at least also the Soviet Union, Latvia and Estonia, as well as the States actually contiguous to Germany. In this connexion His Majesty's Government would venture to recall that in their memorandum of the 26th March, 1935, the German Government stated their readiness to conclude pacts of non-aggression with 'the Powers interested in East European questions.'

The second is that of non-interference in the affairs of other States, as distinct from non-aggression against them. His Majesty's Government recall with satisfaction the Chancellor's statement in the Reichstag on the 21st May, 1935, that the German Government were 'ready at any time to agree to an international arrangement which will effectively prevent and render impossible all attempts to interfere from outside in the affairs of other States.' His Majesty's Government assume that this is still the view of the German Government.

11. In sub-paragraph 18 of paragraph 22 of the German memorandum of the 31st March the German Government 'express their expectation that within a reasonable time (after Germany's return to the League of Nations) and by means of friendly negotiations the question of colonial equality of rights will be cleared up.' His Majesty's Government recognise that this is a matter which will not come under discussion in the present negotiations, but at some later stage a clarification of the German standpoint would appear to be desirable.

12. His Majesty's Government believe that the German Government will think it desirable to give some early definition of the phrase 'the separation of the Covenant of the League of Nations from its basis in the Treaty of Versailles setting,' which occurs in sub-paragraph 18 of paragraph 22.

13. In sub-paragraph 19 of paragraph 22 'Germany proposes the constitution of an international court of arbitration which shall have competence in respect of the observance of the various agreements concluded.' Presumably, these agreements are those mentioned in sub-paragraphs 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 17 of paragraph 22. It would be desirable to know generally the functions and constitution of the proposed court and the relation which the former would bear to the functions of the Council of the League of Nations and of the Permanent Court of International Justice.

In view of the announcement of Germany's willingness to return to the League of Nations, the German Government will, no doubt, be willing to indicate their future attitude towards the Permanent Court of International

Justice (particularly in relation to the Optional Clause) and towards the various provisions for arbitration, conciliation or judicial settlement contained in treaties to which Germany is a party.

14. His Majesty's Government request that your Excellency will see the Chancellor at an early date, when you should leave with him a copy of this despatch.

No. 278

Mr. Eden to Mr. MacKillop¹ (Moscow)

No. 247 [C 3231/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 28, 1936*

Sir,

The Soviet Ambassador asked to see me this morning. He stated that he had just returned from a brief holiday in France, and wished to take this opportunity of speaking to me of the preoccupations of his Government in respect of the present European situation. He would not conceal from me that the Soviet Government had been perturbed by what appeared to be recent manifestations of British policy. It even seemed to them that while we supported the Covenant in respect of Italian aggression, we took by no means so firm a line towards Germany. On the contrary there appeared a constant tendency to find excuses for Germany's actions. The Ambassador felt that this was not the method best designed to secure European peace. There could not be individual settlements with Germany; peace was indivisible. The best method to secure a European settlement was for England, France and Russia jointly to approach Germany and attempt to negotiate such a settlement.

2. I told the Ambassador that His Majesty's Government could not admit, nor would public opinion in this country endorse, the view that Germany's action in the Rhineland was on all-fours with Italy's aggression in Africa. Nobody condoned Germany's action in unilaterally denouncing a treaty she had freely accepted, but Germany had not thereby attacked the territory of a State Member of the League as Italy had done.

3. The Ambassador admitted that there was a distinction but said that it seemed to him to be one of degree. I replied that on the contrary we regarded it as one of principle. In this connexion I had noted with regret certain remarks which the Russian representative had made at the last meeting of the League Council. I did not know whether these remarks were intended to be a reproof to His Majesty's Government, but they were certainly liable to such a construction, and had been so construed with considerable jubilation in Italy.²

¹ Chargé d'Affaires in H.M. Embassy at Moscow.

² The reference is evidently to the speech by M. Potemkin at the Council meeting on April 20, 1936: *L.N.O.J., op. cit.*, pp. 380-1.

4. The Ambassador replied that he had no information as to the intention behind M. Potemkin's observations, and he could hardly think that they were directed against His Majesty's Government. Nonetheless he had already spoken to me of the anxiety of the Soviet Government in respect of His Majesty's Government's attitude. If he might speak frankly, his Government were anxious because they were not clear as to what precisely was the policy which His Majesty's Government wished to pursue. Even in respect of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute there had been sharp changes of direction. Last September and October we had taken up a strong League attitude in respect of this dispute, and we had been strenuously supported by the other Members of the League. All was going well for the League and collective security in this respect, when suddenly and without any warning, the Hoare-Laval proposals were agreed to.³ This had shaken the confidence of other nations, who regarded those proposals as calculated to meet the Imperialist needs of the countries concerned. This was not said in criticism. Nations were clearly entitled to pursue such a policy if they wished to do so, but it did not square with the previous strong support of the League. In the New Year we had returned to a League policy. Therefore the Ambassador concluded that while by no means seeking to defend all that the French Government had done in the matter, he thought that His Majesty's Government also had a measure of responsibility. He felt this all the more keenly today, since our country was the most powerful in Europe, and the action which we took was more important than that of either France or Italy, or even Germany.

However, the past was over, and it was no use to lament about that. The important thing was to ensure the effective maintenance of peace in Europe. The Ambassador was convinced that that could not be done without agreement between London, Paris and Moscow, and without the French Government being sure of the full support of His Majesty's Government in the event of an unprovoked aggression by Germany. It was doubtful as to whether that support was forthcoming which was partly responsible for the previous French attitude.

5. I replied that I could not accept His Excellency's observations on the attitude of this country. We had endeavoured consistently to support the League throughout this dispute. If the League failed, and it appeared to be failing, then the blame could not in justice be laid upon the Government which had taken the greatest share in support of the League. If blame there was it must surely lie elsewhere. Nonetheless I would not conceal from the Ambassador the seriousness with which I viewed the consequences of a League failure in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. Had the League proved successful in that dispute I had no doubt that public opinion in this country would have been willing to go on playing its full part in supporting collective security through the League, and the outlook for Europe would have been correspondingly improved. But now what was to happen? The Ambassador was asking that we should strengthen collective security in Europe.

³ See Volume XV, No. 336.

But how could that be achieved in the face of the failure of collective security in Africa? I did not suppose that there could ever be a clearer case of aggression than in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. How could we turn to the British public, who had borne the chief burden of cost in this dispute, and say to them: 'Despite the League's failure in Africa, despite its inefficacy in staying aggression, we ask you to work to the full in a similar system for Europe?' I feared the problem was not as simple as that. A failure of the League in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute must strengthen isolationists in this country, and must have important consequences for the League's future.

6. The Ambassador stated that he had a further question which he wished to ask me. There had been many reports in the press that His Majesty's Government were contemplating either leaving the League or seeking in some way drastically to amend the Covenant. Could I tell him whether there was any truth in these reports? I replied that I had answered a Question in the House of Commons the previous day which asked His Majesty's Government to make a public declaration to the effect that unless immediate and effective sanctions were imposed to check Italian aggression, Great Britain would leave the League of Nations and claim complete liberty of action in the sphere of foreign policy. My answer had been: 'The course of events at Geneva in connexion with the Italo-Abyssinian conflict must clearly be taken into careful account by His Majesty's Government in determining the future of their own policy.'⁴ That answer accurately stated the present view of His Majesty's Government.

7. The Ambassador seemed a little disturbed to notice the grave view His Majesty's Government took of a League failure in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, and told me that M. Litvinov would himself be present at the Council meeting in May. He asked whether I could give him any indication of our policy at that meeting. I replied that we had already made clear our policy, and that I had nothing at present to add to the statement which I had made before the League Council ten days ago.⁵ It was the French Government who had pressed for an adjournment pending the elections, and I presumed that the action of the Council, and of the League in general in this dispute, must depend in considerable measure on the attitude which the new French Government would take up when the elections were over.

8. Finally on leaving the Ambassador remarked that the Soviet Government were willing to co-operate in the negotiation of a naval agreement. Indeed I understood that the Naval Attaché was at present in Moscow receiving instructions as to the line that he was to take in conversations in London on this subject.⁶

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

⁴ See 311 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 535.

⁵ See No. 263, note 2.

⁶ Cf. Volume XIII, No. 712.

*Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)**No. 709 [J 3725/84/1]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 29, 1936

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this evening, when he spoke of recent developments in Austria and of the anxiety which they were occasioning the French Government. Some little time ago he had asked the views of His Majesty's Government on the action that we considered should be taken in view of the Austrian Government's decree establishing conscription. Since then, however, the Austrian Government has actually put conscription into force, and the French Government would be glad to know as soon as convenient what was our view upon this event now. Was I in a position to tell the Ambassador anything which he could report to his Government this evening?

2. I replied that I regretted that I was not at present in a position to say anything beyond the statement which I had already made in Parliament to the effect that the Austrian Government's action seemed to us to be a matter for all the signatories of the Treaty of Saint-Germain and that we were not therefore disposed to make any individual statement.¹ The Ambassador replied that he hoped that we should be in a position to let him have a statement of our views before long, for he felt sure that the French Government would wish to discuss the situation with us as soon as the elections were over. He did not know what reports I had received from Vienna, but the French Minister in that capital had sent disquieting reports during last week-end which showed that the Austrian Government, contrary to their usual somewhat happy-go-lucky attitude, were perturbed at the outlook. It seemed that the German Chancellor had thought that Signor Mussolini would be occupied for some years in Africa, and that there was therefore no need for him to hurry if he were contemplating an Austrian coup. Now, however, he saw that Signor Mussolini might soon be released and was in consequence perhaps hastening his own preparations.

3. I replied that we had not received, I thought, such detailed reports from Vienna as the Ambassador had referred to, but even if the position was as he had described it, what was there we could do about it? The French Government no doubt thought that the situation in Austria was an excellent argument for liquidating the Abyssinian affair speedily, but I could assure the Ambassador that I did not anticipate being called upon to restrain the ardour of the people in this country in seeking to help Signor Mussolini if he found himself in difficulties in Austria. The Ambassador replied that he fully understood the sentiments of the British public in this matter; at the same time, however, much as we might disapprove of Signor Mussolini's conduct, the Austrian problem remained. He feared, indeed, that the Germans might be counting upon the present attitude of British public opinion as an element in favour of action sooner rather than later.

¹ See 311 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 538.

4. We then spoke of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. The Ambassador said that he feared that the liquidation of this dispute would be very difficult. He had, within the last few days, spoken to Sir Robert Vansittart on the conversation which I had had with M. Paul-Boncour at Geneva.² As the outcome of this conversation the French Government understood that after the elections it was hoped that they would make a representation in Rome with a view to attempting to discover Signor Mussolini's peace terms. Had I any views as to what those terms should be? I replied that this was not exactly how I had understood my conversation with M. Paul-Boncour. The contention of the French Minister for League Affairs had been that his Government could not take up any definite attitude towards Italy before the elections, but that after the elections it would be necessary to take up a firm line which I had understood M. Paul-Boncour wished to do jointly with His Majesty's Government in order to bring the fighting to an end. I said we did not propose to put forward any proposals on behalf of His Majesty's Government as to what the ultimate solution should be.

5. The Ambassador replied that much would depend upon what Signor Mussolini's peace terms were. If he demanded the terms of a conqueror and the subjection of the country as a whole, this could clearly not be agreed to, but if he was prepared to take account of the existence of the League and propose more moderate terms, then it would be necessary for the League to attempt to come to a solution which, though far from satisfactory from the point of view of the Covenant, might well be defended as being less bad than was otherwise possible. I commented that I had seen no sign so far that Signor Mussolini wished to take account of the League. The Ambassador replied that he was not sure that it was necessary to be so pessimistic and that Signor Mussolini would have need of all of us in Europe before long. I remarked that I had seen little signs as yet that Signor Mussolini shared this very reasonable view, and added that I would like to take this opportunity to comment upon a growing tendency which I had observed in certain sections of the French press to comment unfavourably upon the future of this country in the Mediterranean. There were broad hints that our previous supremacy was at an end, and that, in consequence, it was necessary to be associated with Italy, who would be the dominating Power in the future. I felt that I ought to tell the Ambassador that His Majesty's Government had no such feeling and that we were not perturbed as to the ultimate security of our position in the Mediterranean, since we were still the strongest naval Power in Europe.

6. The Ambassador replied that he was glad to be told this, though he had never doubted it himself, but there had been many rumours—some of which had had their origin in this country. The Ambassador thought himself that the future of our relations with Italy might perhaps be complicated by the fate of the Emperor. If the Emperor were to seek to take refuge in British territory that might be a source of embarrassment to relations between Italy and Great Britain in the future, since Italy regarded the Emperor as the

² See No. 265.

nucleus of Abyssinian resistance and would, no doubt, be apprehensive of British support for him if he took refuge, for instance, in the Sudan. On the other hand, he fully appreciated how difficult it would be for us to refuse to allow him the right of asylum if he wished for it. I replied that so far I had no reason to think that the Emperor wished to take refuge anywhere outside his own territory: he appeared to want to remain in Abyssinia itself, and continue resistance to Italy.

7. We then spoke of the next meeting of the Council on the 11th May. The Ambassador commented that it would be necessary for our two Governments to exchange views before that meeting took place. I replied that I was quite ready for such an exchange of views; at the same time I would not conceal from the Ambassador now that I was very preoccupied by the attitude which the British public might be expected to take up henceforth towards collective security. I believed that many people in this country were now thinking on some such lines as the following: 'We had a Covenant obligation to fulfil when this dispute began—we had done our best to fulfil it, yet collective security has not succeeded. All we have got out of it was a considerable expenditure of money and a certain humiliation. Is there ever likely to be a clearer case of aggression in the future? If the League fails this time, can we say with truth and conviction that collective security is of any use hereafter?'

8. The Ambassador replied that he had always appreciated that public opinion in this country did look on Abyssinia as a test case: the same had not been the attitude of the French people, though those in France who championed the League had striven hard to make it so. I agreed that this was a fair statement of the French position, but the question which the British public were beginning to ask was: Would there ever be an aggressor whom the French regard as such except it be Germany? I did not believe that British opinion would be prepared to support the League if it were exclusively organised for that purpose.

9. The Ambassador asked me whether I thought that there was a real danger of an increasing movement in this country for withdrawal from the League. I replied that I thought that was so. It was hardly possible to conceive that the British public could have the same faith in collective security after a failure in Abyssinia as it had had previously.³

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

³ The Cabinet discussed the Italo-Ethiopian situation at its meeting on April 29, when Mr. Eden described briefly but pessimistically some of the effects likely to follow from the Italian victory in Abyssinia. 'The Italian triumph was already reacting on the situation in the Mediterranean. Others could judge better than he as to the effect on the black races in Africa and on the situation in India. . . There was some evidence that Herr Hitler was turning over in his mind the possibility of a "Putsch" against Austria to take advantage of Mussolini's pre-occupation elsewhere.' In the subsequent discussion the First Lord of the Admiralty spoke of the strain of maintaining the existing naval forces in the Mediterranean, and asked for some relaxation of the situation in view of the extreme unlikelihood now of an Italian attack on the British fleet. Mr. Eden objected that probably 'we were in for a long

period of strain and it would create an unfavourable impression for us to withdraw the fleet at the very moment of Italy's triumph'. It was accordingly agreed that 'pending the Meetings at Geneva arranged to begin on the 11th May, no major re-distribution of the fleet should take place, but that this decision should not preclude some relaxation of the present state of instant readiness of the fleet at Alexandria nor unostentatious movements of ships such as the Admiralty had lately been carrying out, provided that these were not on such a scale as to reflect on our foreign policy'. Also that 'the question of the position of the fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean should be considered by the Cabinet immediately after the conclusion of the Geneva meetings'.

No. 280

Letter from Mr. Law to Mr. Sargent (Received May 2)

[J 3728/84/1]

1 CORNHILL, LONDON, E.C. 3, *April 29, 1936*

My dear Moley,

Head this¹ what you like. It is a nil return of opinion plus some African emotion.

Most conversations begin with 'well we are all in a nice mess' . . .² and lead nowhere.

The only thing I have not mentioned is the German loan rumour. It is everywhere derided in the City. I suppose it is a kind of Stickfast exuded by Schacht in Berlin to keep himself in office.

It is very unfair on Ronnie for Fuad to go and die!³

Yours ever,
NIGEL

ENCLOSURE IN No. 280

The City has apparently forgotten about the reoccupation of the Rhineland and all that it entails. Here and there one hears a dispassionate discussion of the probable date for the opening of the next world war. At other times one finds people languidly discussing what kind of fresh political trouble is brewing in Austria.

This oblivion to one half of the international field is not due to the Budget,⁴ for, although the increases in taxation and tea duty were totally unexpected, it has excited no interest whatever. The squelching of the family allowance game, which had been adopted by every married man in the City provided a two days' grouse. Then that too was forgotten.

No one but a few exchange brokers are interested in the new Polish exchange restrictions. The probable result of the French elections is only

¹ See Enclosure below.

² Punctuation as in the original.

³ The reference is to Mr. R. I. Campbell. Fuad I, born 1868, King of Egypt since February 1922, died on 28 April 1936. He was succeeded by his only son Farouk, born 1920.

⁴ Mr. Chamberlain presented the budget to the House of Commons on April 21.

considered from the point of view of whether the American Stock Market is justified in assuming (a) that devaluation is nearer in France, and (b) that devaluation in France would cause any considerable selling of American securities.

Having thus eliminated most of the world as a possible field for recording City opinion, I can now turn to the one question which has not been forgotten. It is, of course, 'Abyssinia'.

The imminent destruction of Abyssinia had undoubtedly released a force which is independent of party, political philosophy or class. Even those who did not perceive the injustice of the original act of aggression by Italy now join in the universal condemnation of her conduct of the war. Two factors have consolidated opinion; contempt at the persistent use by the Italians of Askaris to bear all the brunt, and loathing at the employment of poison gas. Coupled to this there is the feeling (not the less strong because it may be erroneous) that we have somehow let down the Abyssinians. Those who consider this last point see France as the country which has thrown the monkey-wrench into the machinery, and this thought reawakens the always existent anti-French feeling and provides the basis for that disconcerting pro-Germanism which crops up from time to time. Nowhere is there any questioning of the moral right to impose sanctions; everywhere it is felt that existing sanctions must continue, if only to salve the conscience of the British nation. There is a good deal of controversy as to their effectiveness but no criticism of their repercussions on the trade of this country.⁵ I have heard that certain importers of Italian gloves have been put out of business. On the other hand the hat trade of Luton has benefited very considerably. Banks in London show their sympathy by going out of their way to prevent any credits which they may give from benefiting Italian nationals.

Beyond this however there is uncertainty. In some quarters it is felt that the League has received a mortal blow. Some say that is all the more reason for patching it up and trying to make it more effective in the future; others say that collective security has proved itself to be an irreparable failure. There are a few who think that we ought soon to give notice of our resignation from the League. The majority however would prefer to make the continuation of sanctions by France, or perhaps the increase in their severity, the deciding factor. For they see that thus alone could we bring effective pressure to bear on the other League members and at the same time avoid the responsibility of deciding whether we should stay in the League or not.

If what I have written appears confused, it is because thought here is confused. But through it all runs the definite feeling of sympathy for Abyssinia and loathing of Mussolini and all his works. The forces which tore up the Hoare-Laval proposal are, at least in the City, as strong as ever.

⁵ On this point and on the reaction of public opinion to the crisis generally, see D. Waley, *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War 1935-6* (London, 1975).

No. 281

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden
(Received April 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 219 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3671/3249/1]

Most Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, April 30, 1936

Italian advance guard is within 100 miles of Addis Ababa and Abyssinian Government have decided to make no attempt to delay or oppose the advance but will leave chief of municipality with his Ethiopian police to hand over the town.

Would it be possible to suggest to Italian Government that their Commander should if possible give doyen of diplomatic body say 24 hours notice before entering Addis Ababa in order to enable diplomatic body to endeavour, in collaboration with municipality, to facilitate an entry without disorder in the interests of foreign inhabitants and the civil population.

There has been no time to convene a meeting of diplomatic body but I have informed my Belgian colleague of the above and he, as doyen, agrees to await the outcome of my proposal which he considers likely to meet with approval of his colleagues.

If necessary message for doyen could be dropped by parachute in Legation quarter preferably in the paddock on this Legation which is easily recognisable from the air.¹

¹ Foreign Office telegram No. 188 of April 30 in reply said that a communication to the Italian Government by His Majesty's Government was considered impracticable. As the Belgian Minister was the doyen of the diplomatic body in Addis Ababa the proper channel for communication of the message was undoubtedly through the Belgian Government.

No. 282

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 1, 6 p.m.)

No. 101 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3309/99/18]

BERLIN, April 30, 1936

Announcement of General Goering's appointment to supervise regulation of raw materials and foreign exchange given in the 'Times' of April 28th¹ came as somewhat of a surprise. It appears that some arrangement of this kind had been reached between Herr Hitler and General Goering and Dr. Schacht some days before and that senior officials in the Ministries were

¹ *The Times* of April 28, p. 16, quoted an official announcement in Berlin of April 27. General Goering's appointment was set out in a decree of Herr Hitler's dated April 4. He was charged with the 'investigation and promulgation of all the requisite measures' to bring about an improvement in the raw materials and foreign exchange situation for the purpose of safeguarding the further restoration of military power. This decree was sent out in a circular to the Reich Ministers on April 6. The decree stated that Dr. Schacht would assist and if necessary represent General Goering. *D.G.F.P., op. cit., No. 260.*

aware of this. Herr Hitler's object was probably to secure settlement of differences in this matter between Dr. Schacht and the party without his being constantly called upon to intervene while Dr. Schacht felt on the whole his nominal subordination to General Goering would rather strengthen than weaken him in maintaining his economic policy subject to his meeting the views of General Goering and Ministry of War about armament expenditure.² But it had been understood by Dr. Schacht that either no announcement would be made or that announcement would not be in this form and he returned hastily to Berlin yesterday from his holiday to investigate. Further developments are not at present known but even if original intention holds good of taking a step which will on the whole represent a support to Dr. Schacht it cannot be assumed that this step will necessarily have that effect and outlook remains uncertain.

² This conclusion is on the whole borne out by Dr. Schacht, who indicates in his memoirs (*76 Jahre meines Lebens*, Bad Wörishofen, 1953, p. 464) that he had proposed this arrangement because he did not consider his existing authority sufficient to enable him to cope with the abuse of foreign exchange regulations by party officials and others. The appointment is discussed in the broader setting of German rearmament by Gerhard Meinck, *Hitler und die deutsche Aufrüstung 1933-1937* (Wiesbaden, 1959), pp. 157-64.

No. 283

Minute by Mr. Wigram, addressed to Sir R. Vansittart

[C 3300/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 30, 1936*

I attach the proposed amendments to the draft despatch to Sir E. Phipps.¹

The real difficulty arises out of the Cabinet dissatisfaction with paragraphs 7 and 8 of the original draft. I have tried to get over this by deleting the whole of paragraph 7 (the Reich and nation) and inserting in the old paragraph 5 a reference to 'paragraph 4 of the memorandum of the 31st March'² in which is to be found the reference to the Reich and nation. This is not altogether satisfactory; but it gets over the difficulty arising out of the supposed inability of British public opinion to understand the reference to the Reich and nation. The German Government could not, truthfully, say that they had attained complete equality if they regarded themselves as entitled to look after Germans outside the Reich who are *not now* under their jurisdiction; and it leaves it for us to examine further the meaning of the phrase if ever we get round a table with the Germans.

I am not sure if I have adequately met the Cabinet objection in my re-draft of paragraph 8; but Sir W. Malkin, Mr. Strang and I all prefer the re-draft. For the purposes of the Cabinet it might be said to be less offensive than the original draft; it is certainly a wording which is easier for British

¹ These were in accordance with the Cabinet proposals of April 30; see No. 277, note 10.

² See Introductory Note to Chapter III.

opinion to understand; and it has the additional merit of covering the French points about vital right (paragraph 3 of Corbin's memorandum³) and the Reich's security (paragraph 8 of Corbin's memorandum), and also paragraph 2 of Corbin's memorandum. On the whole we are all rather pleased with the redraft of this para[graph] if the Cabinet would take it.

I find it quite impossible to work in the Secretary of State's idea—if I understand it rightly—this morning about arguing from the fact that the Germans had given non-aggression treaties to their neighbours, that they entertained no aggressive designs in the countries beyond those neighbours. To take only one point: this would not cover Danzig. Nor is this the right argument. What we are arguing from is the attainment of equality.

I must re-emphasize the importance of our Questions being adequate. We are pledged to the French on the matter (see the passage in the *Communiqué* of April 10th⁴ which I have underlined, and see also the marked passages in van Zuylen's record⁵ of the conversation at Geneva). I think there would be a breach of faith with the French if the Questions were not adequate; and in such circumstances we should probably not get the French to negotiate.⁶

Proposed Amendments to draft despatch to H.M. Ambassador, Berlin?

(1) Delete paragraph 1 and substitute:

'Your Excellency will be aware that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have for some time past had under the most careful consideration the memoranda communicated to me by the late Herr von Hoesch on the 7th March, 1936, and by Herr von Ribbentrop on the 24th March and the 1st April, 1936, respecting the re-occupation of the demilitarised zone and the peace proposals of the German Government.

'2. Such consideration was natural in view of the importance which, as Your Excellency is aware, His Majesty's Government attach to the establishment in Europe of a real and lasting peace based on the recognition of the equality of rights and independence of every State, together with respect by every State for the engagements entered into by it. I request that in the interview which in the course of the present despatch I propose to direct Your Excellency to seek with the German Chancellor, you will preface your remarks by a statement to this effect.'

(2) Re-number existing paragraph 2, 3 and for the opening words 'Certain of these proposals deal' read 'Certain of the German Government's proposals deal'.

(3) Re-number paragraphs 3 and 4, 4 and 5.

(4) Re-number paragraph 5, 6 and in line 8 insert after 'paragraph 2 of

³ Enclosure in No. 269.

⁴ No. 231. The reference is apparently to paragraph 4.

⁵ Not printed.

⁶ A further minute by Mr. Wigram reads: 'This matter was discussed at a meeting in the Secretary of State's room this morning and a redraft of the despatch to Berlin was decided upon [and] circulated to the Cabinet. R. F. W. 1/5.' For the final stages of the drafting and presentation of the despatch see Nos. 299, 304, 306, and 307 below.

⁷ Cf. Enclosure in No. 277.

the memorandum of the 24th March' the words 'and paragraph 4 of that of the 31st March'.

(5) Re-number paragraph 6, 7 and for 'in so far as' in line 1 read 'if'; in lines 5 and 6 delete the words 'such as the recent Anglo-German Naval Agreement';

in line 7 for 'provisions of the Treaty of Versailles' read 'provisions of that Treaty'; and

delete last two sentences beginning 'while His Majesty's Government . . .' and substitute 'His Majesty's Government do not wish to enter into controversy as to the historical interpretation of events set forth in that paragraph and consequently they do not propose to state their views here. But they must naturally make it clear that they are unable to accept the views put forward by the German Government in the paragraph in question'.

(6) Delete paragraph 7. (N.B. It is now covered by the reference to 'paragraph 4 of the memorandum of the 31st March' inserted in old paragraph 5, now 6.)

(7) Delete in paragraph 8 everything after 'on these important points' in lines 2 and 3 and substitute 'the question is really whether Germany now considers that a point has been reached at which she can signify that she recognises and intends in future to respect unreservedly the existing territorial and political status of Europe'.

(8) Paragraph 10: delete last sentence reading 'His Majesty's Government assume that this is still the view of the German Government'.

(9) Delete paragraph 11.

(10) Re-number paragraphs 12 and 13, 11 and 12.

(11) Re-number paragraph 14, 13 and read 'His Majesty's Government request that Your Excellency will see the Chancellor at an early date when you should discuss with him the points raised in this despatch and leave with him a copy. Your Excellency should explain that these are not exhaustive. There are other matters which will have to be raised at a later date, but at the moment His Majesty's Government prefer only to deal with points the elucidation of which is essential prior to the opening of general negotiations'.

(12) Delete Historical Memorandum.

No. 284

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden
(Received May 1, 12.45 p.m.)

No. 223 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3720/3249/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, May 1, 1936

Emperor sent for me tonight.¹ He was very tired and worn and his usual calm dignity seemed at times to be tinged with despair.

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 30.

Speaking from rough notes he said that while conscious of efforts which His Majesty's Government had made through me to secure justice for the oppressed, he had after fighting for seven months against enormous odds in defence of his country, seen his armies demoralized by the use of gas, while civil population had been bombed and he had even been deprived through bombing of the Red Cross of medical aid organised by foreign sympathisers. After the heaviest fighting in the war at Ashangi no medical help at all was available for large numbers of gassed and wounded. He now wished to appeal through me to His Majesty's Government for help in the following matters.

1. If he were driven to reorganise armed resistance from a place in the West in the neighbourhood of British frontier could he be given facilities for purchase of arms and supplies through the Sudan.

2. In the last resort could he be given facilities to escape by aeroplane to the Sudan.

3. Could he be advised whether under International Law his family could be guaranteed safe passage through French territory via Jibuti.

4. If he made a further appeal to the League for increased pressure on Italy as declared aggressor would His Majesty's Government support his negotiations.

5. Would this Legation take charge of certain family valuables for him and also protect his personal properties in the same way as the French Legation was protecting the Italian Legation property here.

6. Would His Majesty's Government reconsider their refusal of his proposal made on February 19th for a British mandate or protectorate.²

I promised to inform you by telegraph of this appeal and in reply to his request for my own views I dealt with his points as follows.

1. I told him existing communications via the Sudan would be maintained as I had already informed the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2. I said that this [? depended on] your view of the circumstances but I deprecated as too risky any idea of air transport for the Empress and family from here via the Sudan (at which he hinted as an alternative to Jibuti).

3. I said that I felt sure there was no risk and advised him to get in touch with my French colleague regarding passage of Empress and family via Jibuti when arrangements could be made for their onward journey to Palestine in one of His Majesty's ships.

4. I explained difficulties created for the League by recent developments in European situation and bearing of French elections on next meeting of Council on May 11th.

5. I said that I would take charge of small parcels of valuables, but explained that there was no possible means known to me of protecting his immoveable [*sic*] property in occupied territory.

6. I told him frankly that there was no hope of this (see your telegram No. 63).³

As you will readily understand interview was a painful one for us both

² See Volume XV, No. 531.

³ See *ibid.*, No. 540.

and I derived the impression that he was too exhausted to have taken final decisions on many fateful problems with which he is confronted.

He will probably send his secretary to see me tomorrow and I may get further light on his intentions then.

No. 285

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 194 Telegraphic [J 3720/3249/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 1, 1936, 7.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 223.¹

I appreciate the trying circumstances of your interview and fully approve your replies, subject however to following reservations:

(1) You are aware that I have yet to hear from the Governor-General of the Sudan how far Sudan communications can be kept open. But as you are also aware I am most anxious that they should be kept open;

(2) Custody by you of private property of the Emperor may be justified under Article 46 of Hague Convention No. 4 (Land Warfare Regulations). Case of State property (such as Crown jewels) is more doubtful and immovable property is in any case ruled out.

¹ No. 284.

No. 286

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Mr. Eden (Received May 2)

No. 227 [C 3336/97/18]

BRUSSELS, May 1, 1936

Sir,

In the course of a general conversation this morning, Mr. Charles¹ acquired from the Baron van Zuylen the impression that the Belgian Government were somewhat disappointed at Mr. Baldwin's statements in Parliament² and feared that these statements indicated that His Majesty's Government might be prepared to discuss the question of surrendering colonial mandates. Baron van Zuylen said that after what the Belgians had suffered at the hands of the Germans they had no intention of giving up Ruanda-Urundi, for example, and that after Germany's violation of the Treaty of Versailles and Locarno, it was quite out of the question that they should discuss giving up the Belgian mandate or any other mandates.

I have, etc.,

ESMOND OVEY

¹ Mr. N. H. H. Charles had been Counsellor of Embassy at Brussels since January 20, 1936.

² Cf. 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 2415, and 311 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 552-3.

No. 287

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received May 2, 7.45 a.m.)

No. 226 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3735/3249/1]

Most Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, May 2, 1936

My telegram No. 223.¹

The Emperor has just sent his Secretary to inform me that this afternoon² His Majesty assembled Ministers and dignitaries and announced to them that he was leaving Ethiopia with his family and that he renounced the direction of affairs which he confided to the Council of Ministers.

The Emperor and family leave here tonight by special train due at Jibuti early on May 3rd. He will be accompanied by Ras Kassa and Ras Getacho whose future plans are not known.

Present intention of Government is to leave here tomorrow for Harrar to join up with the troops who are still resisting in that . . .³ province and there will be no defence of Addis Ababa. It is expected that an official communication will be made to the Diplomatic Body tomorrow but I think execution of alleged intention is doubtful.

Please see my immediately following telegram.⁴

¹ No. 284.

² This telegram was drafted on May 1.

³ The text was here uncertain.

⁴ See No. 288 below.

No. 288

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received May 2, 9.45 a.m.)

No. 227 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3736/3249/1]

Most Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, May 2, 1936

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

The Emperor wishes to proceed to Jerusalem with his family and asks whether assistance promised family could be extended to include himself and the Crown Prince together on one of His Majesty's Ships to Suez.

If this is possible he would like to know maximum number of people who could be accommodated as he will be accompanied permanently by Blatengeta Herui [*sic*] and by his personal secretary Walde Gipilog.

As I cannot communicate in cypher with British Vice Consul Jibuti I suggest that if your reply is in the affirmative it should be repeated to Commander of His Majesty's Ship for communication to the Emperor, if in the negative could the Resident Aden be asked to send an officer to Jibuti to deliver it?

French Minister here has not been told anything of the movements of the Emperor and family beyond Jibuti.

¹ No. 287.

No. 289

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received May 2, 10.53 a.m.)
Unnumbered Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3737/3249/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, May 2, 1936

Addressed Aden telegram No. 9.

Emperor and family left for Jibuti early this morning. Council of Ministers nominally in charge but without authority. Looting and shooting in the Town. Italians should arrive tomorrow.

Repeated to Berbera, Nairobi, Khartoum and Foreign Office.

No. 290

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 4)
No. 104 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3357/99/18]

BERLIN, May 2, 1936

My telegram No. 101 (Saving).¹

It seems that Dr. Schacht originally understood Goering would co-operate in purchase and allocation of raw materials. The subsequent inclusion politically came as a surprise and shock to Dr. Schacht. I hear privately that an echo of Dr. Schacht's engagements during his recent visits to Copenhagen and Bâle has reached the Reichskanzler. No specific statement on his part can be quoted but secret police are convinced that he is not being as loyal to régime as he should be.

A clear warning to Dr. Schacht is conveyed in an article in last issue of 'Schwarze Korps'.

¹ No. 282.

No. 291

Record by Mr. Wigram of a conversation with M. de Margerie¹
[C 3395/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 2, 1936

In M. Corbin's absence from London and after having tried to get in touch with the Secretary of State and Sir R. Vansittart, M. Cambon asked M. de Margerie to come and see me this morning to make the following urgent communication.

The French Embassy had been requested this morning by M. Flandin to remind the Secretary of State that according to the terms of the *communiqué*

¹ First Secretary in the French Embassy at London.

of April 10th,² it was only upon a condition that the French Government had agreed that the British Government should 'get into touch with the German Government for the purpose of the elucidation of a certain number of points in the German memorandum', viz. that these points included 'those referred to in the French memorandum' (of April 8th).³ Otherwise the French Government would not have agreed not to claim that the 'opportunities of conciliation' had been exhausted.

In these circumstances the French Government did not consider that the British Government was free to draft simply according to their own ideas their communication to Berlin. The British Government had received a mandate at their own demand and that mandate must be carried out in the terms of which it had been entrusted to them.

The French Government wish therefore to recall in particular first their memorandum of April 8th and then the memorandum communicated by M. Corbin to Sir R. Vansittart on April 21st.⁴ The French Government could not agree that the questions should be transformed or reduced in their scope and changed into a form on which the French Government have not been consulted.

In these circumstances the French Government were disturbed by certain press reports which were reaching them.

The French Embassy was instructed to emphasize that if the questions were put in an inadequate form such as to enable the German Government to evade adequate clarification, or if the questions which were of interest to the French Government were omitted, the French Government would consider that they had the right to resume their liberty of action as developed in their earlier statements and in the *communiqué* of April 10th. It would be extremely unfortunate if this situation arose at the approaching Geneva session when the Powers would be back in the old position which had existed at the beginning of the Geneva meeting of over a month ago.

I pointed out to M. de Margerie that the French Ambassador in his letter to Sir R. Vansittart of April 23rd communicating his list of questions, had said that these were 'the questions which my Government would consider it opportune to put to the Government of the Reich'. In these circumstances it was to be assumed that, provided we covered the questions communicated by M. Corbin, we had covered all the questions of interest to the French Government.

I continued that my understanding of the Secretary of State's position was that as the present French communication stated His Majesty's Government had a mandate to deal with the communication to the Germans; and that in these circumstances it was only natural that they should judge the exact manner and form in which they fulfilled it.

In my own view the questions communicated by M. Corbin were very

² See No. 231.

³ See No. 222.

⁴ No. 269: it was received in the Foreign Office on April 23.

adequately covered by the communication in the present form of the draft, though that had still to be finally approved by the Cabinet.⁵

⁵ A copy of this record was forwarded to Sir G. Clerk in Paris as an enclosure in despatch No. 821 of May 5. Mr. Wigram added the following note in his draft of the record: 'I do not think we need bother any more about this communication. All the French questions are covered except Nos. 11 and 13 which there are very good reasons for not covering. But it is of great importance that para. 9 of our draft should not be further amended by the Cabinet or para. 8. R. F. Wigram. 2/5.' Mr. Eden, however, wrote: 'Please speak about this. We cannot I think, allow the French govt. to take up this attitude unchallenged. A. E. May 3.' Mr. Wigram noted on May 5: 'The Secretary of State has now spoken himself to M. Corbin.' See No. 297 below.

No. 292

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received May 3, 11.20 a.m.)

No. 200 Telegraphic: by telephone [J 3752/3249/1]

PARIS, May 3, 1936

Your telegrams Nos. 123¹ and 124.²

Quai d'Orsay has no direct news from Djibuti as yet.

I understand from Political Director that M. de Margerie saw you again yesterday evening and explained that, while French Government had received no question or communication of any sort from Abyssinian Government and its position was therefore not quite the same as that of His Majesty's Government, it was ready to ensure personal safety of Negus as long as he was in French territory and to transfer him to our care if His Majesty so expressed such a wish.³

¹ This telegram of May 2 recorded a conversation in which Mr. Eden informed M. de Margerie of the French Embassy that the British Government had agreed to convey the Empress of Ethiopia on a British ship to Suez *en route* for Palestine if necessary, and had now been asked to convey the Emperor and Crown Prince and others. He asked what was the attitude of the French Government in the matter. Cf. No. 288.

² This telegram, also of May 2, recorded a further conversation on May 2 in which M. de Margerie informed Mr. Eden that his government 'would certainly raise no objection' if the British Government were to provide facilities for the Emperor's journey. Mr. Eden replied that this 'was hardly the answer for which we had looked. The responsibility was in the first instance that of the French Government . . . In the circumstances I thought that the least the French Government could be expected to say to us was that they wished His Majesty's Government to co-operate with them by taking the measures which I had explained we were ready to take . . .'

³ Foreign Office telegram No. 126 of May 4 to Sir G. Clerk, despatched at 12.30 a.m., said that His Majesty's Government had considered the French Government's message and had now decided to send a cruiser for the Emperor. It would arrive in Jibuti 'early tomorrow morning'.

No. 293

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 4, 7.45 p.m.)

No. 163 Telegraphic [C 3369/99/18]

BERLIN, May 4, 1936, 6.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 101 Saving.¹

I hear privately that one of the problems which hastened the Chancellor's decision to appoint General Goering to collaborate with Doctor Schacht was fortification of the Rhineland. The military wished to lose no time in placing orders involving heavy expenditure. Doctor Schacht deprecated any action pending political settlement of Rhineland question. Chancellor in order to avoid having to make immediate decision has asked General Goering to investigate the matter.²

¹ No. 282.

² This comment shows unawareness of the longer-term features of Herr Hitler's rearmament programme and the plans for industrial self-sufficiency which he had been pondering since the second half of 1935: cf. No. 282, note 2; Meinck, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-2; E. M. Robertson, *Hitler's Pre-War Policy and Military Plans 1933-1939* (London, 1963), pp. 82-5.

No. 294

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received May 4, 8.45 p.m.)

Unnumbered Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3855/33/1]

Most Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, May 4, 1936

I regret that it is impossible to spare men or guns to enable United States Legation to hold out. The Legation is five miles from us and outside any defence scheme and we have already a detachment in the Belgian Legation.

This leaves barely enough to ensure our own defence, for 1,200 refugees of whom very few can be used as volunteers.

United States Legation was visited by our armed convoy last night and offered evacuation which was refused except for their women.¹

¹ Three further unnumbered telegrams, two sent by Sir S. Barton to the Foreign Office on the evening of May 4 and one early on May 5, stated that the Belgian Legation had been attacked at 18.00 hours and that the attack was repulsed by a detachment of the British legation guard without casualties; a further attack at midnight was also driven off.

No. 295

Mr. Eden to Sir M. Lampson (Cairo)

No. 230 Telegraphic [J 3761/3249/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 4, 1936, 10 p.m.

Emperor of Ethiopia with the Empress, Crown Prince, other members of his family and suite sailed from Jibuti afternoon 4th May on board H.M.S.

Enterprise. Ship is due at Suez 7th May and will proceed direct through the Canal to Haifa, whence party will be taken on to Jerusalem.

Emperor is travelling incognito and no salutes will be given en route nor should any official visits be made.

No. 296

Minute¹ by Mr. Pinsent regarding the relative positions of Dr. Schacht and General Goering

[C 3431/99/18]

BERLIN, May 4, 1936

I saw Dr. Ritter of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs today, and asked him if he could interpret for me what had been happening with regard to Schacht's position. I referred not only to the appointment of General Goering to control the allocation of foreign exchange and raw material, but also to the attacks which had been made on Schacht from Party quarters and to rumours that his position in the last few days had been very critical.

Dr. Ritter stated quite positively that in his opinion the arrangement which had been made represented a definite strengthening of Schacht's position. Controversies between him and other Ministers about the allocation of devisen had of course been continuing for years. Goering had already once or twice been instructed by the Chancellor to go into one or two specific questions of this kind and to settle them, and the Chancellor was unwilling to have such questions constantly referred to him. As a result Schacht himself took the initiative two or three months ago to propose an arrangement on the lines of that which has now been carried out. This arrangement was at first kept entirely secret, and it seems in fact that Goering has not yet taken any action under the new arrangement. (A meeting is apparently to be held today at which probably procedure only will be considered). It was only because the arrangement began to leak into the press that the announcement was made on the 28th April.² This announcement was drafted by Goering's staff in consultation with the *Reichskanzlei* and was not shown to Schacht (who was at Badenweiler) before publication. It was not very happily worded, but according to Dr. Ritter it is not the case that the original arrangement made by Schacht was confined to the control of raw materials or that the announcement went in substance beyond the arrangement which Schacht had made. In Dr. Ritter's opinion the arrangement will to a considerable extent settle the controversy between Schacht and the Party.

From another reliable source I have heard that there has been a fierce controversy for some time back between Schacht and the Party about questions of personnel in the *Reichswirtschaftsministerium*. Certain subordinate officials have been demanding promotion on the ground that they were

¹ Forwarded as an enclosure in Sir E. Phipps's despatch No. 468 of May 5.

² Cf. No. 282, note 1.

members of the Party before 1933, and, on Schacht's refusal, brought the Party into the matter. The controversy has been going on so long that there are eighty vacancies waiting to be filled by promotion. Schacht wanted to deal with the matter with a high hand and dismiss the troublesome officials, but one of his establishment officers (also a pre-1933 member of the Party) dissuaded him and endeavoured to smooth matters over and to secure a decision by Hess³ in Schacht's favour. Hess characteristically has failed so far to give a decision, and the whole matter still remains in suspense. This controversy appears to have been an additional reason for Schacht's return from Badenweiler to Berlin on the 29th April.

³ Herr Rudolf Hess, *Reichsminister* and Herr Hitler's Deputy.

No. 297

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 820 [J 3894/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 4, 1936*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this evening when he stated that he had been to Paris during the weekend, and had a conversation with M. Flandin, whom he found in bed exhausted after the effects of electioneering.¹ M. Flandin was much preoccupied by the Abyssinian situation. He thought that it was necessary to choose the psychological moment at which to approach Italy. The present seemed to be such a moment, when Signor Mussolini, put into a good humour by the extent of his success, might be expected to be in a mood to listen. It would be a great pity if the present opportunity were allowed to pass. After all there were many matters to be talked about. There was the tripartite agreement of 1906 under which each of our countries had certain rights. In the view of the French Government it would be useful that there should be some communication between the three Powers who were signatories to that Treaty, which was still in force, as soon as possible. The Ambassador added that M. Flandin had spoken to me about British interests in Abyssinia when we were last in Geneva.

2. I replied that I found some difficulty in understanding what it was that we and the French Government were expected to say to Signor Mussolini at this moment. So far as British interests in Abyssinia were concerned these were covered by engagements which the Italian Government had entered into and repeatedly confirmed. I should like a little time to consider the point, but my first impression was that it would not be well understood if we

¹ The final polling on May 3 in the French elections confirmed the victory of the *rassemblement populaire*, the Popular Front, which was able to command 381 out of 618 votes in the new Chamber. The Sarraut Ministry did not resign until after the first sitting of the new Chamber on June 1. M. Blum had formed a government by June 4 in which M. Yvon Delbos was responsible for foreign and colonial affairs.

were to choose this moment to get into touch with the Italian Government in relation to our individual interests in Abyssinia. This procedure seemed to me of doubtful value and to be open to dangerous misconstruction.

3. The Ambassador replied that surely the essential was to open up conversations with the Italian Government in some way. Otherwise what was going to happen at Geneva when we met at the Council next week? None of the small Powers would know what to do. They would look to us for a lead. Unless we had communicated with the Italian Government we could not give them any such lead. I repeated that while I saw the force of the Ambassador's arguments, I was still unable to understand what it was that we were to say to the Italian Government.

4. The Ambassador replied that we could speak both of principles and of our individual interests in some such language as the following 'You have many difficulties before you in Abyssinia. Those difficulties will be all the greater if you cannot arrange matters with your neighbours in Africa. Moreover, the outlook in Europe is difficult for you also, and it will be very serious for you if you find yourself in isolation there'. Then it would be necessary to recall to the Italian Government the obligations which they had under the 1906 Treaty, to remind them that that Treaty was still in force, and to get an assurance from them that this was so. The Ambassador added that he did not contemplate that we should make ourselves spokesmen for the League. This we were not in a position to do.

5. I replied that I did not feel myself attracted by the procedure which the Ambassador suggested. It seemed to amount to warning Italy of difficulties of which she must surely be well aware, and of doing so in order to emphasise our concern for our individual interests. These interests might be more or less important, but they did not seem to me to be the chief matter at stake in this unhappy situation. In any event I would carefully consider what the Ambassador had suggested and speak to him again in the matter within the next day or two.²

6. The Ambassador then stated that he had one other subject about which he wished to speak to me. M. Flandin was anxious to know whether there was any answer to the note which M. de Margerie had left with Mr. Wigram on the subject of the questions which we were putting to the German Government.³ I replied that I did not think that the document called for an answer. We were making good progress with our questions, and I hoped that it would be possible for His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin to ask for an interview with the German Chancellor about Thursday of this week. The Ambassador then asked whether it would be possible for the French Government to be given a copy of the questions a day in advance. I replied that I was afraid it would not be possible, and I felt that such a course would not give the best chance of success to our questions in Berlin. The Ambassador

² M. Corbin's account of the conversation up to this point is given in *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 161. The remaining paragraphs of Mr. Eden's despatch are covered rather briefly in *ibid.*, No. 162.

³ See No. 291.

rejoined that he hoped that the real reason for my not wishing to give him the document was that I feared that it would be reproduced prematurely in the French press. If this were so he would be less unhappy than if he thought the reason was of a more serious political character. He added that if the French Government were not consulted in advance I could hardly be considered to be acting as *mandataire* for them.

7. I replied that the position of His Majesty's Government in the matter seemed to me quite clear. We had suggested at the last meeting of the Locarno Powers that in present circumstances it would be a wise step to put certain questions to the German Government. The French Government had concurred, and had since told us which questions they wished put. I thought in fact that it would be found in due course that we had covered nearly all the ground which the French Government had referred to. But the questions were clearly put on our own responsibility, and I had no desire to implicate the French Government in that responsibility. The Ambassador replied that what was really troubling him was the fear lest as a result of the policies which we each of us felt compelled to pursue, our Governments would be found to be co-operating less and less. If we did not make joint representations in Rome over the Abyssinian dispute, and if we did not act jointly in Berlin, then the drifting apart would become more and more evident. This would have a very unfortunate effect on public opinion in the two countries.

8. I replied that I appreciated the force of the Ambassador's arguments. While, however, little useful purpose would be served by arguing as to which Government's fault it was that our policy had drifted apart, we had to face realities as they now existed in two countries where, in the last resort, the Governments were dependent upon their respective public opinions. I was quite clear that it was not only the desire of His Majesty's Government, but also the insistent preoccupation of British public opinion that every effort should be made to bring about a negotiation between the Locarno Powers including Germany. If it could be argued, as I thought it reasonably might, that by giving the French Government in advance a copy of the questions which we were addressing to the German Government, we were thereby prejudicing the chances of a favourable reply to these questions by the German Government, without doubt His Majesty's Government would be blamed, and I felt bound to confess in a measure deservedly blamed, for the consequences. The French Government must realise that we had done much, when account was taken of the state of public opinion in this country, to meet them in attempting to deal with the situation created by the German remilitarisation of the Rhineland zone. The Staff talks would be fresh in the Ambassador's mind, and he would know the state of mind of public opinion in this country well enough to appreciate that these had not been popular, to put it mildly. Nevertheless the Government had persisted in their decision that these talks must take place in order to contribute their share to the restoration of confidence in Western Europe. Our attention must now be concentrated upon doing all in our power to get answers from the German

Government which would make further negotiation possible. I must therefore repeat my reply that it would not be possible for me to give an advance copy of our questions to the German Government to any other Government. The Ambassador remarked that he had noted with keen regret that suspicion of French policy seemed to be growing ever stronger in this country. He gave as an example the questions which had been asked with regard to the Jibuti Railway. He was convinced that the decision which the French Government had come to in regard to the railway was in the interests of the Abyssinian Government, but questions were being asked in Parliament on this subject that were distinctly unfriendly in tone, and the Ambassador was beginning to wonder what was the real source of these questions. In the circumstances he would like to consider leaving with me some information as to the French Government's attitude towards the railway. I replied that I should be happy to receive any information which the Ambassador wished to give me on this subject but that I was sure that it would be a mistake to believe that the questions asked in Parliament on this subject were put by Members who were unfriendly to France. On the contrary, General Spears, perhaps the most noted friend of France in the House of Commons, had been among the questioners.⁴

9. On taking his leave the Ambassador reiterated his hope that I should be able very shortly to have a further conversation with him, and to indicate the views of His Majesty's Government on the procedure to be followed in respect of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute in the course of the next few days.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

⁴ See 311 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 886-7.

No. 298

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received May 5, 11.10 a.m.)

Unnumbered Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3862/33/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, May 5, 1936

United States Legation safely evacuated this morning.¹

Turkish Legation was safely evacuated on May 3rd.

Please inform Washington and Angora.

¹ Cf. *F.R.U.S.*, 1936, vol. iii, pp. 262-4.

No. 299

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 112 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3396/4/18]

Important

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 5, 1936, 1.10 p.m.*

Cabinet will give final consideration tomorrow May 6th to instructions to be sent to Your Excellency respecting questions to be addressed to German Government.¹ Meanwhile of course you will take no action. Copy of draft of instructions has been sent to you by air bag via Cologne this morning—and instruction to act will in due course be telephoned to you after Cabinet meeting tomorrow.

Your Excellency should, however, now arrange for an interview with the Chancellor for May 7th: and inform me as soon as possible of time fixed.

You should not for the time being make any communication to your French or Belgian colleagues.

¹ Cf. No. 277, note 10.

No. 300

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received May 5, 4.30 p.m.)

Unnumbered Telegraphic: by wireless [J 3898/3249/1]

Immediate

ADDIS ABABA, *May 5, 1936*

Large force of Italian troops in lorries has been entering the town past this Legation since sixteen hours.

No. 301

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 5, 10 p.m.)

No. 164 Telegraphic [C 3407/4/18]

BERLIN, *May 5, 1936, 8.25 p.m.*

I hear that the Chancellor who has not been much in his office lately, spent the morning there looking through the news. He finds his worst anticipations justified by the outcome of French elections. 'If you shake hands with the devil' he said to one of his entourage 'you must not be surprised if you become his prisoner'. He fears that he may have to negotiate with a very weak French Government composed of obnoxious personalities instead of Monsieur Laval with whom he hoped to achieve permanent results for Europe.

Some of the British and French newspaper forecasts of our questionnaire

irritated him considerably. He remarked that he would be prepared to clear up any points arising out of his speeches or statements but that he was not an Aunt Sally to have missiles . . .¹ at him and that no government had been furnished with divine right to put him in the box and cross-examine him. He had made valuable peace proposals and these deserved attention: not isolated questions.

Referring to the League of Nations he said that its defeat should be utilized as an occasion to reform it. No League could function unless the Great Powers within it were in complete agreement beforehand as to the policy that it was to pursue. If Germany, France and England were in unison no question in Europe could present difficulties.

¹ The text was here uncertain.

No. 302

Mr. Eden to The Commander, H.M.S. 'Enterprise'
Unnumbered Telegraphic [J 3845/3249/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1936, 8.38 p.m.

Your telegram of May 4th.¹

Please inform the Emperor that His Majesty's Government regret that they do not feel it practicable at any rate at the present moment to give effect to His Majesty's wishes that he shall continue his voyage to London.²

¹ This telegram, received at the Admiralty at 6 p.m. on May 4, forwarded a message from the Emperor in which, after sending his 'deepest thanks' to the British Government for having acceded so quickly to his request for transport, he asked to be permitted 'to continue voyage direct to London'. He gave an assurance that during his stay in London he would 'abstain from any act in furtherance of the war in Ethiopia'. But he hoped that the British Government would 'uphold our peaceful attempts to prevent a member of the League of Nations being destroyed solely at the will of a state unanimously condemned (? as an) aggressor'.

² A further unnumbered telegram of May 7 to the Commander of H.M.S. *Enterprise* gave a similar reply to a further message from the Emperor on May 6.

No. 303

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received May 5, 9.30 p.m.)
No. 285 Telegraphic: by telephone [J 3907/1000/1]

ROME, May 5, 1936

At 5.45 this evening the people of Italy were summoned to assemble to hear Signor Mussolini's declaration on the occasion of the entry of the Italian troops into Addis Ababa. At 7.45 Signor Mussolini made a speech lasting 15 minutes of which the following are the salient points.

'I announce to the Italian people and to the world that the war is finished.

I announce to the Italian people and to the world that peace is re-established.

It is not without emotion and pride that I pronounce this great phrase.

But it is necessary to add that it is a question of our peace, of Roman peace, which is expressed in this simple irrevocable expression; Ethiopia is Italian.

. . .¹ The diverse races of the Lion of Judah have shown by the clearest signs that they wish to live tranquilly in the shadow of the Italian Tricolour.

. . .¹ We are ready to defend our resplendant [*sic*] victory with the same intrepid and incontestable determination as that with which we have won it.²

Text follows by post.³

¹ Punctuation as in the original.

² Foreign Office telegram No. 154 to Sir E. Drummond recorded a conversation of May 4 in which Mr. Eden had explained to Signor Grandi the action taken by the British Government in connexion with the movements of the Emperor of Ethiopia. Signor Grandi mentioned that during 'the last few days he had received no less than five communications from Signor Mussolini in the form of letters and telegrams, all of them emphasising his desire to put an end to the tension existing between our two countries'. The Cabinet on May 6 examined the position resulting from the Italian victory in Abyssinia in connexion with both the Parliamentary debate on the same afternoon (see No. 309, note 1, below) and the forthcoming meetings at the League of Nations. After a somewhat protracted discussion the Cabinet agreed '(a) That in the Parliamentary Debate that afternoon, if pressed as to the future of the League of Nations, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be authorised to say that it was too early for him to make a statement that afternoon: the matter was fundamental to our foreign policy and would have to be studied intensively in consultation with the Dominions: (b) That at the League of Nations the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be authorised to say that as a consequence of recent events there would have to be a stock-taking of the present position of the Covenant. As this would probably have to be undertaken by the Assembly, and not by the Council, it would be as well for Governments to consider the matter in the first instance. (*But see below.*) (c) That it would be preferable for the subject to be considered at the regular annual session of the Assembly in September rather than at a special session: (d) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should examine whether it would be possible and desirable for the Council of the League of Nations to appoint a Committee to consider in advance a re-draft of the Covenant, instead of leaving it to the regular Meetings of the Assembly, and report to the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy: (e) That so far as the Italo-Abyssinian affair was concerned, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should *not* agree to join the French in making representations to Rome on the basis of the Treaty of 1906; but that he should be authorised (as he himself proposed) to inform the French that we would make no joint approach to Rome; that Italy ought now to tell the League what her proposals were for the future of Abyssinia; and that the more reasonable the Italians were the better would be their chance of securing a removal of sanctions: (f) That so far as sanctions were concerned, the attitude of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (as he himself proposed) in Parliament should be to say that he would advocate no new sanctions and that the future of existing sanctions was a question for the League of Nations to decide. At the League he should not take the initiative for a decision either to put on new sanctions or to take off existing sanctions. (The President of the Board of Trade reminded the Cabinet of the heavy penalties that were falling on British nationals through the application of sanctions.)'

³ Not printed; Signor Mussolini's speech was reported in *The Times*, May 6, 1936, p. 16.

Note by Mr. Wigram for Mr. Eden

[C 3468/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1936

The outstanding point on the draft to Berlin¹ concerns the last sentence of paragraph 8² reading

'The question is really whether Germany now considers that a point has been reached at which she can signify that she recognises and intends in future to respect the existing territorial and political status of Europe, except in so far as this might be subsequently modified by free negotiation and agreement'.

This sentence represented a compromise reached after a long discussion in the course of which it was urged that any written reference to 'subsequent modification of the existing territorial and political status of Europe' would arouse disquiet; and that, if Germany undertook to respect the existing territorial and political status of Europe, that left her liberty to work for its modification by the method of peaceful agreement. It was also urged that the undertaking to 'respect' the existing territorial and political status of Europe could be held to be opposed [? to] not only an attack from outside by Germany on the integrity and independence of her neighbours, but also internal intervention by her in their affairs with a view to the alteration of their existing political status.

Two amendments to the present wording have been suggested. One by Sir John Simon reads:

'The point on which His Majesty's Government would invite a definite assurance from the German Government is that they would not feel justified in attempting to secure changes in the existing territorial and political status of Europe by other than peaceful means.'

The other, put forward by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, reads:

'The question is really whether Germany now considers that a point has been reached at which she can signify that she has no intention of attempting to change the existing territorial and political status of Europe

¹ Cf. No. 277, note 10.

² By this stage in the discussions this paragraph had taken substantially the form which appears in No. 307 below. At the Cabinet meeting on May 4, according to the minutes, 'Doubts were raised once more as to the wisdom of including Paragraph 8, which asked for an explanation of the distinction between the Reich and the German nation'. Mr. Eden said that this 'was a matter in which every nation in Europe was intensely interested'. Later he said that 'all his advisers at the Foreign Office, whatever their general attitude towards Germany, were in favour of including Paragraph 8. He wished to place on record that if the Cabinet insisted on omitting it they would be closing their eyes to a matter of great importance.' The Cabinet asked Mr. Eden and Lord Halifax to decide on the final form of paragraphs 8 and 9.

otherwise than it may be modified subsequently by free negotiation and agreement'.³

The Foreign Office view is that the first of these amendments certainly, and to some extent also the second amendment, do not adequately cover the possibility of German internal intervention in the affairs of her neighbours. In this connection it may be recalled that in the summer of 1933 the complaint we had against Germany was her interference in Austria by means of the *Habicht* broadcasts⁴ emitted from German stations, ostensibly not under the control of the German Government, and the dropping of National Socialist leaflets in Austria by aeroplanes which had started from Germany, and indeed the activities of the Austrian Legion which had its headquarters in Germany.⁵ These are all so far as the German Government are concerned, 'peaceful means': and they might well proceed—as well as the grant of money etc. to National Socialists in Austria—while the German Government went on maintaining that they 'had no intention of attempting to change the status quo'. An undertaking to 'respect' the status quo would on the other hand be much more satisfactory, and yet it would leave the way open to change by legitimate methods.

³ The paragraph remained unchanged in the final version (No. 307 below).

⁴ See Volume V, No. 237.

⁵ See *ibid.*, No. 219.

No. 305

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 6, 11.15 a.m.)

No. 165 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3409/4/18]

Immediate

BERLIN, May 6, 1936, 11.8 a.m.

Your telegram No. 112.¹

Directly I received above I applied for an interview with the Chancellor on May 7th. He left Berlin yesterday evening and it is not certain when he will return. In these circumstances shall I on receiving your instructions to-day discuss matters with Minister for Foreign Affairs and hand him a copy of your despatch of May 5th?²

¹ No. 299.

² In a further telegram, No. 166 of even date, received at 12.10 p.m., Sir E. Phipps reported that Herr von Neurath had said that the Chancellor had left Berlin to keep three important engagements but would be ready to receive Sir E. Phipps on his return. In the meantime Herr von Neurath asked to be handed the questionnaire.

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 113 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3421/4/18]

immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 6, 1936, 8 p.m.*

My telegram No. 112.¹

Cabinet approve the draft despatch sent to Your Excellency by air bag yesterday (which should be numbered 541 and dated to-day) subject to the three following modifications:²

(a) in penultimate sentence of paragraph 2 inverted commas should close after word 'peace' and not after word 'work'.

(b) for 'would invite' in the last sentence of paragraph 6 read 'will welcome' and

(c) in last sentence of paragraph 8 delete 'in future'.

In view of the Chancellor's absence from Berlin (see your telegrams Nos. 165³ and 166⁴) you should as suggested make your communication to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and see the Chancellor himself as soon as possible after his return to Berlin.

Your Excellency should impress upon the German Government that His Majesty's Government earnestly trust that their answers on these points may be of such a nature as to facilitate the early opening of the negotiations which both our Governments hope may lead to a general settlement in Europe.

His Majesty's Government are particularly anxious that no room should be left for misunderstanding in matters so important. If, therefore, Your Excellency judges at any time from your preliminary discussions with the German Government that such a course would be useful and that they consider that it would be of assistance, Your Excellency is authorised to indicate that His Majesty's Government would be happy to accept an invitation for one of His Majesty's Ministers, though not the Foreign Secretary, to pay an early visit to Berlin in order to assist Your Excellency in your discussions. I leave to Your Excellency's discretion to decide at what moment such an indication could advantageously be given with a view to furthering prospects of successful negotiation. From our point of view what we want to avoid is that the German Government should return an unsatisfactory answer to our enquiries without hearing from a Minister, who had himself participated in the discussions here the whole range of considerations we have had in view.

Your Excellency will realise that though the German Government are not specifically asked for answers on certain of the points dealt with, His Majesty's Government will hope to obtain clarification of all the doubtful points

¹ No. 299.

² These corrections were incorporated in the final version of the despatch: see No. 307 below.

³ No. 305.

⁴ See *ibid.*, note 2.

mentioned in paragraphs 6, 7 (first sentence), 8 (two separate points), 9, 10 (six separate points), 11 (five separate points) and 12 (before Germany's return to the League is discussed).

I told the French Ambassador on May 4th⁵ that I did not intend to give to the French or any other Government a copy in advance of our proposed communication to the German Government. Immediately after your interview with the Chancellor has taken place you are authorised to give your French, Belgian and Italian colleagues if they enquire a very general account of what passed. I will in due course myself give copies of your communication to the French, Belgian and Italian Ambassadors here.

⁵ See No. 297.

No. 307

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 541 [C 3421/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 6, 1936*

Sir,

Your Excellency will be aware that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have for some time past had under the most careful consideration the memoranda communicated to me by the late Herr von Hoesch on the 7th March, 1936,¹ and by Herr von Ribbentrop on the 24th March² and the 1st April, 1936,³ respecting the reoccupation of the demilitarised zone and the peace proposals of the German Government.

2. Such consideration was naturally indispensable in view of the importance which, as your Excellency is aware, His Majesty's Government attach to the establishment in Europe of a real and lasting peace based on the recognition of the equality of rights and independence of every State, together with respect by every State for the engagements entered into by it. It is the desire of His Majesty's Government to make every effort within their power to co-operate in the promotion of the objective described by the German Government in the memorandum of the 31st March, as 'the great work of securing European peace'; and it is accordingly with this aim in view and in order to open the way to fruitful negotiation that I address to you this despatch and request your Excellency to seek an interview with the German Chancellor. You should preface your remarks by a statement to this effect.

3. Certain of the German Government's proposals deal, as your Excellency is aware, with temporary arrangements in the demilitarised zone pending the completion of the first stage of the general negotiations for the peace of Europe which were proposed by the German Government. On

¹ No. 42, Enclosure.

² No. 163, note 2.

³ See Introductory Note to Chapter III.

these temporary arrangements it is not my purpose to comment in the present despatch, though your Excellency knows that His Majesty's Government regret that the German Government have not been able to make a more substantial contribution towards the re-establishment of the confidence which is such an essential preliminary to the wide negotiations which they both have in view.

4. In the course of my interview with Herr von Ribbentrop on the 2nd April,⁴ I informed his Excellency that His Majesty's Government regard the proposals for the future in the German memorandum of the 31st March (that communicated to me on the 1st April) as most important and as deserving of careful study. This study is now at an advanced stage; but His Majesty's Government find difficulty in carrying it further without discussing more closely with the German Government (as foreshadowed in the Geneva *communiqué* of the 10th April)⁵ a certain number of points in the three memoranda, particularly in those of the 24th and 31st March. His Majesty's Government feel sure that the German Government will share their view that the greatest possible precision is desirable before general negotiations can open, in order that in the future no misunderstandings may cloud the confident co-operation of the Powers of Europe, which it is the most earnest hope of His Majesty's Government, as they are sure also of the German Government, that the proposed negotiations may advance.

5. There are a number of passages in the German memoranda of the 24th and 31st March which leave His Majesty's Government in some doubt as to the conception held by the German Government of the basis upon which the future settlement should be founded.

6. The first point on which it is desirable to be clear is whether Germany regards herself as now in a position to conclude 'genuine treaties'. There are passages in the second sub-paragraph of paragraph 1 of the German Government's memorandum of the 24th March, 1936, which seem to suggest that it is the view of the German Government that by their action in the Rhineland they have established this position. On the other hand, there are passages in paragraph 2 of the memorandum of the 24th March which might be capable of a different interpretation, which, however, His Majesty's Government would not themselves wish to draw. It is, of course, clear that negotiations for a treaty would be useless if one of the parties hereafter felt free to deny its obligation on the ground that that party was not at the time in a condition to conclude a binding treaty, and His Majesty's Government will welcome a clear declaration from the German Government to remove any uncertainty on this point.

7. If the argument set out in paragraph 6 of the German Government's memorandum of the 31st March is intended to be of general application, it might give rise to doubt as to the view which the German Government take of the continued maintenance in force of the remaining operative clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and, indeed, of any agreement which might be said to have had its origin in the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. His

⁴ See No. 198.

⁵ See No. 231.

Majesty's Government do not wish to enter into controversy as to the historical interpretation of events set forth in that paragraph, and consequently they do not propose to state their views here. But they must, of course, make it clear that they are unable to accept the views put forward by the German Government in the paragraph in question.

8. There is in paragraph 4 of the memorandum of the 31st March a further cause for uncertainty. It is stated in that paragraph that 'the German Government have received from the German People (*Volk*) a solemn general mandate to represent the Reich and the German Nation (*Nation*) to carry out a policy which implies the preservation under all circumstances of their freedom, their independence and at the same time their equality of status.' A distinction is apparently drawn between the Reich and the German Nation. The question is really whether Germany now considers that a point has been reached at which she can signify that she recognises and intends to respect the existing territorial and political status of Europe, except in so far as this might be subsequently modified by free negotiation and agreement.

9. I turn now to other matters. Sub-paragraph 13 of paragraph 22 of the memorandum of the 31st March refers to 'the conclusion of an Air Pact to supplement and reinforce these (Western European) security agreements.' In the spring of 1935 the German Government were understood to hold that the negotiation of an Air Pact should not be complicated by an attempt to accompany it by an agreement for the limitation of air forces. Since then a somewhat contradictory position seems to have arisen. In the Reichstag on the 21st May, 1935,⁶ Herr Hitler mentioned the possibility of an agreement for air limitation on the basis of parity between the great Western Powers, provided, so we understood, that the development of the Soviet air force was not such that revision would be necessary. The Chancellor's speech of the 21st May, 1935, was made after the signature of the Franco-Soviet Treaty; yet in December 1935 he informed your Excellency that the Treaty had made air limitation impossible.⁷ A decision not to attempt to accompany a Western Air Pact by a regional agreement for limitation of air strengths would be very much regretted by His Majesty's Government; and the statement in paragraph 24 of the German memorandum that the German Government are impressed by the results achieved in the limited sphere of the recent agreement respecting naval armaments encourages them to hope that the German Government will be able to fall in with their views on this point.

10. His Majesty's Government are gratified to see that, in sub-paragraphs 10 and 14 of paragraph 22 of the memorandum of the 31st March, the German Government propose the conclusion of non-aggression pacts between Germany, on the one hand, and France, Belgium and possibly Holland on the other. They note that the German Government are willing that these pacts should be accompanied by treaties of guarantee. The exact form which these instruments will assume must be a matter for detailed negotiation.

His Majesty's Government also note the proposal in sub-paragraph 17 of

⁶ See Volume XIII, No. 222, note 1.

⁷ See Volume XV, No. 383.

paragraph 22 for non-aggression pacts between Germany and the States on Germany's south-eastern and north-eastern frontiers. His Majesty's Government would venture to recall the general outline of such pacts given to Sir John Simon by Baron von Neurath in Berlin on the 26th March, 1935.⁸ They would be glad to know whether the German Government suggest that these pacts should follow generally that outline, and whether they agree that these pacts also may be guaranteed by mutual assistance arrangements.

The announcement which the German Government have been able to make of Germany's readiness to re-enter the League of Nations permits His Majesty's Government to assume that no difficulty will arise as regards the conformity of the proposed non-aggression pacts with the obligations of members of the League of Nations, and that the operation of these pacts will take place within the framework of the Covenant.

There are two further points to which attention should be drawn. The first concerns the meaning of the words 'the States on Germany's south-eastern and north-eastern frontiers'. His Majesty's Government cannot but feel that the general settlement would be very greatly facilitated if the German Government could see their way to interpret these words so as to cover at least also the Soviet Union, Latvia and Estonia, as well as the States actually contiguous to Germany. In this connexion His Majesty's Government would venture to recall that in their memorandum of the 26th March, 1935,⁸ the German Government stated their readiness to conclude pacts of non-aggression with 'the Powers interested in East European questions.'

The second is that of non-interference in the affairs of other States, as distinct from non-aggression against them. His Majesty's Government recall with satisfaction the Chancellor's statement in the Reichstag on the 21st May, 1935, that the German Government were 'ready at any time to agree to an international arrangement which will effectively prevent and render impossible all attempts to interfere from outside in the affairs of other States.'

11. In sub-paragraph 19 of paragraph 22 'Germany proposes the constitution of an international court of arbitration which shall have competence in respect of the observance of the various agreements concluded.' Presumably, these agreements are those mentioned in sub-paragraphs 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 17 of paragraph 22. It would be desirable to know generally the functions and constitution of the proposed court and the relation which the former would bear to the functions of the Council of the League of Nations and of the Permanent Court of International Justice.

In view of the announcement of Germany's willingness to return to the League of Nations, the German Government will, no doubt, be willing to indicate their future attitude towards the Permanent Court of International Justice (particularly in relation to the Optional Clause) and towards the various provisions for arbitration, conciliation or judicial settlement contained in treaties to which Germany is a party.

⁸ See Volume XII, p. 739.

12. When your Excellency sees the Chancellor, I request that you will discuss with him the points raised in this despatch and leave with him a copy. Your Excellency should explain that these are not exhaustive. There are other matters which will have to be raised at a later date; and before the return of Germany to the League of Nations comes under discussion, the German Government will no doubt think it desirable to give some definition of the phrase 'the separation of the Covenant of the League of Nations from its basis in the Treaty of Versailles setting,' which occurs in sub-paragraph 18 of paragraph 22. At the moment His Majesty's Government prefer only to deal with points the elucidation of which is essential prior to the opening of the general negotiations which, as stated above, they are sincerely desirous of promoting.

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 308

Letter from Major A. H. L. Hardinge¹ to Mr. Hoyer Millar²

[J 3990/33/1]

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, May 6, 1936

Dear Hoyer Millar,

I enclose herewith a message from the King to Sir Sidney Barton³ which I shall be much obliged if you will arrange to be transmitted at once.

Yours sincerely,
A. H. L. HARDINGE

ENCLOSURE IN No. 308

To

Sir Sidney Barton
British Legation,
Addis Ababa.

I have watched with admiration your handling of the very difficult situation which has recently confronted you. I am glad to think that you have been able to afford protection, not only to British subjects, but to others as well, and I warmly congratulate you and your Staff including the Legation Guard.⁴

EDWARD R.I.

¹ Assistant Private Secretary to the King.

² Assistant Private Secretary (Diplomatic) to Mr. Eden.

³ Transmitted to Addis Ababa by the Foreign Office in an unnumbered *en clair* telegram on May 7 at 11.30 a.m.

⁴ Sir S. Barton's telegram No. 240 of May 9, after expressing 'sincere thanks for the gracious recognition', said that the King's message was read by him to the Legation Guard on parade that morning.

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 219 Telegraphic [J 4006/33/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 7, 1936, 4.58 p.m.*

Following is extract from the speech which I made in the House of Commons on May 6th in Committee on Supply.¹

Begins. I think the Committee will share the great satisfaction which the Government have felt over the splendid work that has been performed during the recent grave emergency in Addis Ababa by the British Legation guard of Indian Infantry, under the command of Major Charter.² It is not too much to say that those troops have saved a large number of foreign lives. In no single case was an appeal addressed to the British Legation guard in vain. Not only did they protect some 2,000 refugees of 23 different nationalities in the Legation itself, repelling at least one attack by rioting tribesmen against the compound, but they were able to send detachments to help other foreign missions and individuals imperilled by the mob. I should like to add that the Belgian Government have to-day conveyed their thanks to His Majesty's Government for the assistance given to the Belgian Legation by a Sikh detachment.³ I would only say further that I am confident that when the full history of the recent crisis comes to be known Major Charter and the officers and men under his command will have been found worthily to have upheld the highest traditions of the Indian Army. I would also like, on behalf, I am sure, of the whole Committee, to express our deep regret at the death of Dr. Melly at a moment when he was attending the wounded in the streets of Addis Ababa.⁴ Ends.

¹ See 311 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1731-44.

² Cf. Nos. 294 and 298. Major W. F. Charter, M.C., was Officer Commanding the Legation Guard.

³ Notes of thanks were also received from the United States Ambassador on May 6 and the Turkish Ambassador on May 7.

⁴ Further details including reports by the Assistant Military Attaché, Captain R. H. R. Taylor, on the riots, by the Consul, Mr. C. G. Hope Gill, on measures taken in preparation for the emergency, and by the Refugee Camp Commandant and Quartermaster, Colonel R. J. Stordy, on the running of the camp, are printed with some supporting correspondence in the Command Paper Cmd. 5213, *Ethiopia No. 5 (1936), Reports and Correspondence regarding the Rescue and Relief of British and Foreign Nationals at Addis Ababa during the Disturbances of May 2 to 6, 1936.*

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 8)

No. 114 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3458/4/18]

BERLIN, May 7, 1936

My telegram No. 168.¹

I read over slowly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning and left with him a copy of your despatch No. 541² of yesterday.

Baron von Neurath remarked that the matters raised in this communication were of course too important to be answered on the spot but he promised that the German Government would consider them with the closest attention and would make every effort to give clear replies to all the various questions.

Baron von Neurath made the following comments on certain points as I read them out. For instance in regard to paragraph 8 of your despatch he observed, as I expected, that the expressions 'people' and 'nation' had probably been inserted in the German memorandum by Herr Hitler himself who had presumably not meant to imply any difference but had merely used each word as it best suited the ear. His Excellency added that he could already tell me that Germany did recognise and intend to respect the existing territorial and political status of Europe except in so far as this might be subsequently modified by free negotiation and agreement. For instance Germany, he said, had the earnest hope that the present state of affairs in Danzig which was calculated to form the subject of endless disputes might be modified by free negotiation and agreement. In any case Germany had no intention of modifying it by a 'coup de main'.

When I reached paragraph 9 of your despatch Baron von Neurath pointed out that although the Chancellor's speech of the 21st May, 1935,³ was made after the signature of the Franco-Soviet Treaty, that treaty had then not been ratified. Its ratification had rendered air limitation very much more difficult.

When I read out the penultimate paragraph of paragraph 10, Baron von Neurath said that it would be unwise to entertain any hope that Germany would be ready to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. Here also the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact since the drawing up of the German memorandum of the 26th March 1935,⁴ had altered matters entirely.

As to a non-interference agreement His Excellency repeated his usual objection, viz. the impossibility of finding a satisfactory description of 'non-interference'. The German experts had already tried hard to find some definition but had failed. I urged that Dr. Gaus⁵ should renew his efforts in this direction.

¹ In this telegram of May 7 Sir E. Phipps stated that following the receipt of No. 306 he had handed a copy of No. 307 to Baron von Neurath.

² No. 307.

³ See Volume XIII, No. 222, note 1.

⁴ See Volume XII, p. 739.

⁵ Director of the Legal Department of the German Foreign Office.

After concluding the perusal of the despatch I impressed upon Baron von Neurath how deeply His Majesty's Government desired an early opening of negotiations which might lead to a general settlement in Europe, and I remarked that if His Excellency or the Chancellor had any views in this matter I hoped they would inform me thereof without delay. Baron von Neurath then spontaneously remarked that there had apparently been an idea that Lord Halifax might later on come out to Berlin. If so, he would welcome the idea but he feels that the appropriate moment for such a visit has not yet been reached: when it had been the German Government would certainly be very happy to welcome Lord Halifax or any other member of His Majesty's Government out here.

His Excellency then expressed some fear lest the usual weak French Government should emerge as a result of the French elections. I was here able to tell His Excellency in confidence what my French colleague had on his return from Paris told me only yesterday. M. François-Poncet said that after seeing a large number of French politicians of all shades of opinion he felt convinced that the next French Government would be probably as desirous as was M. Laval himself of reaching a satisfactory arrangement for a European settlement. My French colleague added, and I told this also to Baron von Neurath, that if he personally could do anything to facilitate such an arrangement he would be only too pleased to make every effort to do so.

Baron von Neurath agreed with me in thinking that it might conceivably be even easier to reach an agreement with a French Government of the Left than it would have been to do so with any other. His only fear, however, is that the next Government may be too weak to carry out its good intentions.

Baron von Neurath promised to arrange for me to have an interview with the Chancellor next week soon after the latter's return to Berlin. Meanwhile he will probably see the Chancellor at Munich on May 10th, and will discuss matters fully with him there.

No. 311

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Sargent (Received May 8)

[C 3472/357/18]

BERLIN, May 7, 1936

My dear Sargent,

More leakage!

Foreign Office cyphered telegram No. 112 of May 5th¹ told me that copy of draft instructions had been sent to me by air bag that morning and that instructions to act would be telegraphed to me after the Cabinet meeting on May 6th. I was told to arrange for an interview with the Chancellor for May 7th. I was also told not for the time being to make any communication to my French or Belgian colleague.

¹ No. 299.

At about 7.30 p.m. on May 5th Segrue, the 'News Chronicle' correspondent, asked to see me. He said that his newspaper had told him by telephone that it had heard (but from a source which made it impossible to use the information) of the above instructions to me. If Segrue could confirm it from this end the 'News Chronicle' would be able to announce it.

Luckily Segrue is an excellent fellow and I explained to him that nothing should be published; but why all these useless cypher precautions and injunctions for me to be 'boutonné' even with my French and Belgian colleagues if the Press is told of my instructions soon after they reach me?²

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

² In the Foreign Office no explanation of this leakage could be found. Mr. Sargent remarked on May 13 that 'these continual leakages in respect of our Berlin correspondence are very disquieting'. Commander R. W. B. Cotesworth of the Communications Department made the following comments on the general procedure.

'It seems to me impossible to discover the source of leakages when so wide a distribution is given to F.O. telegrams as at present. Any doubts about the cypher need not be entertained.

The policy of the last few years has been steadily to increase the circulation of F.O. telegrams & in present conditions these must be sent out as soon as possible if they are not to be out of date by the time they reach the recipients. The Communications Dept. work in a constant state of rush to achieve this end.

The question of the distribution to be given to telegrams is considered on following lines. A series of messages on a major subject is usually given Political distribution (some of these may be very secret but are of proportionate importance to the whole story) so that the recipients may have complete information: private & personal telegrams are of course not so treated & if in any doubt the Distribution Room consults the department concerned, we could do the same with all telegrams but this would cause considerable delay. R. W. B. Cotesworth. 14.5.36.'

A note by Mr. C. J. Norton of May 25 says that 'Sir R. Vansittart does not wish to take this up at present'.

No. 312

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 221 Telegraphic [J 3907/1000/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 8, 1936, 6.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 230.¹

¹ This telegram of May 7 from Addis Ababa referred to a preceding telegram, No. 229 of May 6, giving the text of a note of May 6 from Marshal Badoglio to heads of missions in Addis Ababa, in which he announced that he had assumed all civil and military powers in the country in the name of the King of Italy. Pending future arrangements the British Legation would enjoy recognized privileges of representation and protection of the countries and subjects that it represented. Telegram No. 230 said that an oral message had been added to the effect that cypher could be used 'for communication with my government and consuls but not with any Ethiopian authority'. Sir S. Barton's telegram No. 234 of May 8 said that the diplomatic body had decided on May 7 to await instructions before replying to Marshal Badoglio's note.

Counsellor of Italian Embassy enquired on 6 May under instructions from his Government whether His Majesty's Government would agree to remove the extra detachment of Indian troops drafted into Addis Ababa last September. Removal of normal Legation Guard was not asked for.

He then made it clear that Italian military authorities were prepared to guarantee safety of British subjects in Addis Ababa (I notice that Marshal Badoglio's note to you refers only to security of the personnel of the Legation) and to afford every facility for the departure of the troops.

Do you consider that Italian request (which is one which an authority in military occupation has the right to make) may *safely* be acceded to upon the understanding mentioned in the preceding paragraph?

Signor Vitetti also mentioned question of withdrawal of the Legation although on this point he made no representations, taking the line that Italian Government would be glad to know any wishes His Majesty's Government might have in the matter. Please consider this question and let me have your views without however delaying reply as regards extra Legation Guard, on which point I hope you will be guided entirely by the question of safety.

No. 313

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 9, 10.6 a.m.)

No. 170 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3521/4/18]

BERLIN, May 9, 1936

My telegram No. 169.¹

I made it clear to Minister for Foreign Affairs late on afternoon of May 7th, after being rung up by your department, that reason why His Majesty's Government suggested early publication of your despatch No. 541 was the extensive press leakage taking place in regard to it. Baron von Neurath said that in these circumstances he agreed that publication was desirable, and he promised to explain matters to the Chancellor, who, he felt sure, would quite understand.

German press this morning nevertheless continues to express surprise at our sudden decision to publish[;] press comments in my immediately following telegram.²

¹ This telegram from Sir E. Phipps received at 5.15 p.m. on May 8 said 'Translation of your despatch No. 541 [No. 307] of May 6th is published in this evening's press.' German press comment was to the effect that the surprising rapidity of the British publication was doubtless intended to distract British public opinion from other events and difficulties.

² Not printed.

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received May 10, 11 a.m.)

No. 241 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 4097/33/1]

ADDIS ABABA, May 10, 1936

Your telegram No. 221.¹

In so far as the safety of British subjects in relation to defence of this country is concerned the detachment can be removed and commandant estimates that ten days would be required to prepare for departure by train.

The only risk to safety of British subjects in Addis Ababa now arises from so-called searches for looted property which are being conducted by foreign representative (including British) residents in houses of other foreign (including British) and native residents with the aid of Italian soldiers and without proper control. I have already brought to the notice of the Italian command cases in which British subjects are concerned and a . . .² has been promised. I have also issued orders to British subjects (as my French colleague has to French subjects) not to invoke Italian aid in this matter except through Legations. Unless this practice is drastically checked by Italians it must lead to a system of private vendetta, and terrorism in the town, for persons found with *alleged* loot in their possession are liable to be shot out of hand.

Although continued presence of extra detachment could not afford any direct protection, to link its withdrawal with receipt of satisfactory assurances regarding treatment of British subjects in this respect might render such assurances more readily obtainable.

There is however an overriding consideration namely that our extra detachment was brought here by agreement with the Abyssinian Government as part of a joint security scheme which involved the placing of a French detachment at Dire Dawa. Even if it be held that pledges given by us to the Abyssinian Government (who would never have allowed French detachment into Dire Dawa but for our pressure) have no longer any value, it appears to me essential that we should not negotiate separately with Italians for withdrawal of our detachment without regard to question of French detachment. In my opinion the two detachments should withdraw simultaneously.

¹ No. 312.

² The text was here uncertain.

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received May 11, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 50 L.N. Telegraphic [J 4156/84/1]

GENEVA, May 10, 1936, 11.55 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.¹

Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs asked to see me this morning, when we had a general discussion on the situation at this meeting of the Council. M. Aras, whom I found by no means unduly depressed, was clear that on no pretext must any decision be taken at the Council this time. It was necessary at first to await the formation of the new French Government. He thought the best course would be to adjourn discussions of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute *sine die*, leaving to the President of the Council the task of calling that body together in an emergency session whenever he saw fit. Actually this would probably not be before the last week in June. M. Aras thought effect of this delay would be to give the Italians cause to think.

In the meantime Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs thought Committee of Eighteen should be called together and in some form or other re . . .² existing sanctions perhaps by instructing its experts to examine their working afresh. I understood M. Aras thought meeting of Committee of Eighteen necessary lest if position were not clearly stated some countries might be tempted to start to raise sanctions, this was also . . .² stated by M. Massigli in a brief conversation which I had with him this morning.

Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs then spoke of more general aspects of Mediterranean situation. It was important, he argued, to bear in mind that until a satisfactory agreement was reached between League and Italy the latter country remained under Article 16, whether sanctions were actually in force or not. The importance of this was that mutual assistance provisions of Article 16 also remained in force. Within next year Italy would either have to come to an arrangement with other Mediterranean Powers through the League which would establish peace or she would find herself in extreme difficulty owing to her internal situation or Signor Mussolini would be compelled to embark upon some further adventure. In last named event which M. Aras thought on the whole the least probable the adventure would be based either on Albania or Dodecanese or, as Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs thought most probable, it might be directed against Egypt or the Sudan. In any of these three events the mutual assistance provisions of the Covenant would be of the greatest value. Moreover, if

¹ Mr. Eden had left London for Geneva on Saturday May 9 by the evening air service to Paris, continuing his journey from there by the night train. As President of this, the ninety-second, session of the Council his duties made it necessary for him to reach Geneva a day in advance of the opening meeting. After arrival in Geneva on the morning of May 10 he had conversations in the afternoon with M. Rüstü Aras (Turkey), M. Massigli (France), M. de Graeff (Holland), and Señor de Madariaga. He dined with M. Avenol. Cf. *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 193.

² The text was here uncertain.

Italy were aware that they continued in force this would be an important deterrent.

I replied that I found it hard to believe that Italy having secured Abyssinia would risk loss of everything by attacking the British Empire. To this M. Aras replied that she certainly would not do so unless driven to it by Fascist internal difficulties and wild irresponsibility such as he feared was now the characteristic of Italian people.

M. Aras went on to indicate what he would regard as a satisfactory Mediterranean settlement. There should be a pact between Mediterranean Powers and an agreement as to naval forces. This the Foreign Minister seemed somewhat optimistically to believe should be on basis of Italy having one-third of Great Britain's naval forces and each of the Powers of Balkan Entente having one-third of Italy's.

M. Aras continued that he thought it most important that Italy should be made to feel her isolation and that nobody should enter into conversations with her. If Great Britain firmly took up this attitude then he was quite confident no other Mediterranean Power would act otherwise. I assured M. Aras that we had in fact no intention of entering into conversations with Italy under 1906 treaty or indeed in independent conversations of any kind.

Two features impressed me from this conversation. First, that M. Aras did not seem to consider His Majesty's Government's prestige had suffered by recent events. On the contrary he assured me of support and friendship of Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece. Secondly, M. Aras scarcely mentioned Germany and for him clearly it is Italian dictation only that exists.

Repeated to Angora, Rome, Paris, Saving.

No. 316

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received May 11, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 54 L.N. Telegraphic [J 4164/84/1]

GENEVA, May 10, 1936, 11.55 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Monsieur de Graeff Dutch Foreign Minister asked to see me this evening when he gave me some account of the meeting of Neutral Powers which had taken place at Geneva today (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Holland, Switzerland and Spain).

The Foreign Ministers of all these countries except Spain are now in Geneva and M. van Zeeland arrives tonight.

The Neutral groups M. de Graeff explained had decided in favour of maintaining the existing sanctions and had also agreed that their representatives on the Council should strongly contest any attempt that the Italian representative might make to claim that Abyssinia had now no right to be represented at Geneva.

M. de Graeff added in confidence that he had taken the view at the

meeting of Neutral Powers that only course now left to the League if it was to preserve its dignity was to expel Italy. He added that some other members of the Neutral Group had not fully shared his view since they feared that departure of Italy might be followed by that of Switzerland and Austria with consequent dangers of disintegration.¹ M. de Madariaga whom I had seen earlier in the afternoon thought it possible that Italy might threaten withdrawal from the League if sanctions were continued. In such an eventuality M. de Madariaga appeared to favour the League then expelling Italy instead of awaiting her withdrawal at the end of two years. Generally there is an atmosphere of considerably greater determination than at the meeting of the Council.

Repeated to The Hague, Rome and Paris.

¹ Minutes on this telegram included the following by Mr. Peterson and Sir R. Vansittart. 'The adoption of the term "neutral" is in itself sufficiently curious to make one doubt the determination of this particular group. M. Peterson. 11.5.' 'I do not think that we shd put much faith in these "neutrals" till they show a great deal more virility than they possess at present. Wd they apply sanctions to Germany? I don't believe it. R. V. May 11.'

No. 317

Sir R. Vansittart to Sir E. Chatfield (Admiralty)

[J 3859/1000/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 11, 1936*

Thank you for your letter of May 4th concerning the situation in the Mediterranean.¹

While we realise to the full the heavy strain which has been imposed upon all ranks of the Fleet as a result of the exceptional conditions under which they have been compelled to serve during recent months, I am afraid that the position is as yet too obscure to permit us to furnish you with any reliable

¹ In a private letter to Sir R. Vansittart of May 1, Sir E. Chatfield referred to the Cabinet decision of April 29 (No. 279, note 3) but asked whether there was any objection to some unostentatious movements of battleships which would not reduce the strength of the British fleet in the Mediterranean. In a telephone conversation with him of May 1 Sir R. Vansittart pointed to a despatch from Sir E. Drummond, No. 499 of April 25, which suggested that it was 'quite possible, perhaps even more than possible that Signor Mussolini would attack us if even existing sanctions were maintained'. In a further private letter of May 4 to Sir R. Vansittart, Sir E. Chatfield asked whether the Foreign Office intended 'to pursue the Sanctionist front until, as Drummond foresees, it leads to inevitable hostilities, the hostilities that the Chiefs of Staff have always foretold. . .' Commenting on these letters, Mr. Thompson remarked on May 6 on 'the growing impatience of the Service departments' over the confused situation. 'I am afraid it cannot be denied that there is a tendency in Service circles to regard this department as rather a grim joke, and to feel that F.O. appreciations of the Italo-Abyssinian problem have been singularly wrong. Recent statements in Parliament about the effectiveness of sanctions are frequently alluded to in this respect—just as we are inclined to criticise the W[ar] O[ffice] for having led us astray about the military prospects of the Italians.'

forecast of developments in the near future. Only after present meeting of the Council at the earliest is it likely that the fog will thin sufficiently to enable us to attempt any kind of appreciation.

No. 318

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received May 12, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 55 Telegraphic [J 4182/84/1]

GENEVA, May 12, 1936, 12.5 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

M. Paul Boncour¹ came to see me this morning² immediately after his arrival at Geneva.

He seemed tired and depressed and full of anxiety for the future. He appears to think that Italy's withdrawal from League can hardly now be avoided and he is impressed by dangers of new constellation of dissatisfied States which may, he fears, be in process of formation composed of Italy, Germany, Japan, Austria, and Hungary.

He described briefly interview which French Ambassador had had with Signor Mussolini in the middle of last week at which representations of French Government in regard to any decision of annexation had passed unheeded.³ He regretted that His Majesty's Government had not been able to associate themselves with this step. He also recalled reserves which Ambassador has since made on behalf of French Government to Signor Suvich.

Italian Government were now, he thought, in a mood to contest both the appearance of Italo-Abyssinian question on agenda of present session and representation of Abyssinia on Council. It would not be possible, he said, for Council to admit Italian thesis on either point and if break with Italy had to come it was better that it should be on a point of procedure on which Italy was unmistakably in the wrong than on a point of substance where there might be room for argument. But he already contemplated prospect of Italy's withdrawal with the greatest distaste.

French Government were as a result of the elections⁴ in a difficult position and wished to do nothing to compromise situation for their successors. Unless, as he feared, Italians intended to force the issue now he would be content to leave things as they were until new government was in power. In any event he was anxious to work in closest harmony with myself and to pursue our common course as calmly as possible.

Repeated to Rome, Saving.

¹ M. Paul-Boncour was the French representative at the ninety-second session of the Council.

² This telegram was drafted on May 11.

³ Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 173 and 191, and brief references in Aloisi, *Journal*, pp. 379, 382.

⁴ Cf. No. 297, note 1.

No. 319

Foreign Office to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 234 Telegraphic [J 4086/3957/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 12, 1936, 12.35 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 234.¹

Your reply should take the form of a simple acknowledgment 'pending receipt of instructions from my Government'. You should add a sentence to the effect that until such instructions are received your communications with the Marshal are on the footing that you regard him as the authority in military occupation of Addis Ababa.

Repeated to Rome No. 156.

¹ Cf. No. 312, note 1.

No. 320

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received May 13, 10.15 a.m.)

No. 59 Telegraphic [C 3596/4/18]

GENEVA, *May 13, 1936, 9 a.m.*

Following from Secretary of State.

Monsieur Boncour came to see me this morning¹ much upset because last night when I had learnt of a statement which he had made to his press that a meeting of four Locarno Powers had been arranged for today I had given instructions for it to be stated by British Delegation that no such arrangement had yet been agreed to. This denial Monsieur Boncour affirmed had greatly distressed him.

I replied that so far as I was aware no such arrangement had been made. In our previous conversation Monsieur Boncour had only made a passing allusion to the matter and I had told him of certain difficulties I saw. In the circumstances I was very doubtful of the value of a Locarno meeting since French Government agreed that we could only adjourn. Monsieur Boncour begged me earnestly not to maintain this attitude. He pointed out that we had undertaken in *communiqué* after our April meeting² to have a further meeting during the Council. If we did not in fact now have such a meeting even if it only lasted a few minutes a very bad impression would be created in France and Belgium. I replied that I did not believe the world would be much impressed by a meeting which achieved nothing but if Monsieur Boncour attached so much importance to it I could only suggest that we should agree beforehand upon *communiqué* which would be issued. I was most anxious that nothing should be said which would in any way jeopardise the chances of our negotiations with Germany. Monsieur

¹ i.e. May 12.

² See No. 231.

Boncour at once assented and agreed to a discussion of a draft *communiqué*—see my telegram No. 60.³

Monsieur Boncour then returned to his hotel to invite other Locarno Powers to be present. Baron Aloisi however replied that since he had had orders to return to Rome as soon as possible he felt himself unable for that reason to accept an invitation to attend a meeting of Locarno Powers.

Nothing of any significance passed at the actual meeting except that Monsieur Boncour handed me certain information which had come into possession of the French Government showing that Germany was not only increasing forces in the Rhineland, that these had ceased to be symbolic, and were becoming serious and that even fortification had begun. A record of meeting and copies of Monsieur Boncour's memorandum follows by bag.⁴

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Brussels, and Berlin.

³ This telegram, despatched from Geneva at 9 a.m., and received at the Foreign Office at 10.5 a.m. on May 13, gave the text of a *communiqué* issued on May 12 stating that the representatives of Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom had met at Geneva (on May 12) and had recognized the desirability of postponing a further exchange of views until the German reply to the British questionnaire had been received.

⁴ Not printed.

No. 321

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received May 13, 11 a.m.)

No. 62 Telegraphic [J 4270/84/1]

GENEVA, May 13, 1936, 9.40 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

'The Council, having met to consider the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia, recalls the conclusions reached and decisions in this matter in League of Nations since October 3rd, 1935, is of opinion that further time

¹ This telegram, No. 61 L.N. to the Foreign Office, despatched at 9.40 a.m. on May 13, gave a summary account of the private and public meetings of the Council on May 12. At a private session of the Council on May 11 at 5 p.m. Baron Aloisi had objected to the inclusion of the item, 'Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy', in the agenda of the session and to the presence of the Ethiopian delegate, M. Wolde Mariam, at the Council table, on the ground that 'Nothing resembling an organised Ethiopian State exists. The only sovereignty in Ethiopia is Italian sovereignty.' Baron Aloisi then withdrew, the Council decided to retain the item on the agenda, and M. Wolde Mariam also withdrew. Cf. *L.N.O.J.*, *op. cit.*, p. 535. The public session of the Council on May 12 was concerned wholly with the Italo-Ethiopian question (*ibid.*, pp. 540-1). The resolution above, which Mr. Eden stated was the result of an exchange of views between various members of the Council, was submitted. M. Wolde Mariam asked that 'all the provisions of Article 16 of the Covenant should at last be enforced'. M. Ruiz Guinazú (Argentina) accepted the resolution 'while making a reservation, on behalf of my Government, as regards the adjournment of the discussion'. M. Rivas Vicuña (Chile) and M. Zaldumbide (Ecuador) accepted the resolution subject to the expression of doubts on behalf of their governments as to the wisdom of continuing the imposition of sanctions. The resolution was adopted, subject to these reservations.

is necessary to permit its members to consider the situation created by grave new steps taken by the Italian Government, decides to resume deliberations on this subject on June 15th, and considers that in the meantime there is no cause for modifying measures previously adopted in collaboration by members of the League'.²

Repeated to Rome and Paris (Saving).

² Lord Stanhope told the Cabinet on May 13 that he had spoken on the telephone to Mr. Eden at Geneva; Mr. Eden had reported 'that matters had gone well on the previous day. There had been more Foreign Ministers at the Council of the League than recently, and they were in a less depressed state. They were satisfied that the decisions of the previous day had been right ones. The Secretary of State would be leaving Geneva on the morrow.'

No. 322

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received May 13, 2.30 p.m.)
No. 63 L.N. Telegraphic [J 4276/84/r]

GENEVA, May 13, 1936, 12.30 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

I had a conversation with M. Litvinov this morning¹ in the course of which he expressed himself considerably frankly on present international situation.

As regards Italian-Abyssinian conflict the League would, he thought, be compelled in June to choose between two alternatives. Either we must press on with sanctions to the end including imposition of a blockade and even closing of the Canal or must determine to obtain what we could as a price for dropping existing sanctions. Only thus could the Emperor recover his throne.² Soviet government were prepared to agree to either of these two courses. If His Majesty's Government were to decide for the first then Soviet government were prepared to follow us to the end. If we decided for the second then we should determine what price we wished to obtain for raising of sanctions. It was essential that Italy should make some contribution to the future security of Europe. That contribution must be both general and local. Her future attitude to collective security particularly must be made clear. Europe must know on which side Italy stood. Her local contribution was needed to make even plainer her attitude towards Austria. It was not enough to say that action would be taken in the event of military aggression by Germany since Anschluss might come by other means and Italy must show herself ready to deal with it by whatever means it came.

¹ This telegram was drafted on May 12.

² In his telegram No. 305 of May 14 to the Foreign Office commenting on this telegram, Sir E. Drummond remarked: 'I fear Monsieur Litvinov is more than optimistic if he believes Signor Mussolini can be induced by prospective raising of sanctions to agree to re-establishment on the throne of the Emperor of Abyssinia.'

M. Litvinov added that he had expressed some such views as these to Baron Aloisi last night. Latter had not unduly demurred as to necessity of Italy making some contribution.

M. Litvinov then reviewed the League's action in the course of the last seven months. He laid the blame for the League's failure squarely upon M. Laval whose actions in Rome in January [1935]³ and also at Geneva later in the year were mainly responsible for what had followed. M. Litvinov was not himself convinced that if the League had taken united action to close the Suez Canal to Italy last year there would have been war. The League however decided upon other lines of action and these had been proved to be based upon a miscalculation. We had all anticipated that the war in Abyssinia would have lasted at least a year. If it had he had no doubt that sanctions would have played their part. In the circumstances he was not so pessimistic as to the future; the League had done more on this occasion than it had done in Manchuria. After all it was no small achievement for some 50 nations to have agreed to take economic action. Next time they might be willing to go further.

M. Litvinov admitted that nations could not be expected to take military action in parts of the world where they had no vital interest. It would be some time before the world reached that stage. In the meantime however he contended vehemently that existing obligations of the Covenant must be maintained though Article 16 could be interpreted as limited to economic action such as had been taken in present dispute. In addition in given areas nations could undertake limited commitments to render each other military assistance. (This point closely resembles that expressed to me by M. de Madariaga recently). M. Litvinov said he thought it essential that nations should make their position plain in respect of their League obligations with the least possible delay so that at September Assembly the League could see its future clearly.

M. Litvinov then spoke of Germany. He expressed himself as generally satisfied with terms of our note⁴ although some points might have been put more crisply. He hoped however that we should now leave the Germans to answer it. It would he was convinced be a great mistake to follow up our questions by anything in the nature of a ministerial visit because we should then become entangled in a negotiation and the significance of our questions would become blurred. It was the essence of any negotiation that there must be some modification in each proposal and we should soon be telling the Germans which questions we were interested in and which we were not. This was a prospect which M. Litvinov did not welcome. In general Soviet Foreign Minister was at no pains to conceal his apprehension regarding Germany's intentions.

Repeated to Rome, Moscow, and Paris.

³ Cf. Volume XIV, No. 90, note 3.

⁴ No. 307.

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Sargent (Received May 15)
[C 3676/4/18]

BERLIN, May 13, 1936

My dear Sargent,

Although of course only the Führer counts, you may care to hear the following first impressions in official quarters of my communication to Neurath on the 7th May.¹

Dieckhoff, whom Newton² saw on 8th May on other business, was obviously puzzled at the decision to publish and seemed to know nothing of my explanation to Neurath of leakages or of Neurath's ready agreement, which Newton thereupon repeated.³ Dieckhoff pointed out that the despatch purported to be of a purely preliminary nature and showed by his attitude that he thought it a pity that publication should have taken place at such an early stage.

Dieckhoff went on to say that the terms of my communication, and apparently also the informal and friendly manner in which I had presented it, were appreciated. At the same time the German Government might feel that they were being called upon for a further advance before the other Governments concerned had expressed opinions on the proposals already made. Newton rejoined that it was precisely in order to enable us to form opinions that the elucidation of various points was being sought. Dieckhoff did not seem to anticipate any particular difficulty, or delay, in furnishing replies.

As regards the reference to the League in the third sub-paragraph of 10 (at the top of page 6 of the despatch), Dieckhoff thought some doubt might be felt nowadays as to what real reliance could be placed on the Covenant.

It was pointed out to him that if Germany joined the League she would be able to assist in making it effective.

In the last sub-paragraph of 10 on the same page mention is made of 'non-interference'. Dieckhoff observed that if the rest of the text (it is point 13 of Hitler's speech), had been quoted, it would have helped to reveal the attitude of the German Government and the difficulties in the way of an international arrangement.

Newton took the opportunity of emphasising the importance of air limitation and mentioned my disappointment at the difficulty in achieving it which Neurath had foreseen. Dieckhoff seemed to think that the German Government would be ready to enter into an air limitation agreement provided it included all the Governments whose air forces mattered. Germany lay between the west and the east and had only one air force, so that she could not limit it solely with regard to the Locarno Powers.

On the same day Kennedy, of 'The Times', saw Aschmann, the Head of

¹ See Nos. 307 and 310.

² Mr. B. C. Newton was H.M. Minister at Berlin.

³ Cf. No. 313.

the Press Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and found him most indignant at the decision to publish our questions. He gave Kennedy the clear impression that not only had the German Government had no say in the matter, but that at my original interview with Neurath on May 7th, (when the question of publication was never even mentioned), I had stated without explanation that it was going to be published and so forced the hand of the German Government. In view of the secrecy imposed on the Embassy, Kennedy had of course no means at the time of checking this impression, which has, I believe, been given generally to press correspondents. Although Aschmann's conduct seems very blameworthy, it may be that Neurath, who is notoriously lazy, gave no clear account of what had occurred either to Aschmann or Dieckhoff. In any case the explanation that the original decision not to publish had had to be reversed owing to leakages might easily fail to carry conviction in this country.

Kennedy's impression was that the Germans were not really so much annoyed by publication as by the questions themselves, and in particular by the enquiry whether they now really meant business (felt themselves sufficiently 'gleichberechtigt'). However, it remains to be seen to what extent an annoyance, which may emanate from Bülow or Ribbentrop, is shared by the Führer.⁴

Yours ever,
ERIC PHIPPS

P.S. Since writing the above I hear on excellent authority that my surmise was correct. The Chancellor on learning from Neurath that publication had been arranged, flew into a temper, whereupon the Baron concealed his part in the conversation and threw all the blame on to your humble servant. If the Chancellor raises the question with me in Neurath's presence I shall have to defend myself! E. P.

⁴ Mr. Wigram minuted on May 18 that there was 'great ignorance here about the reasons for which we decided to ask Baron von Neurath to agree to publication viz the leakages coming from Berlin which suggested that the Germans intended that the whole substance of the note should appear in dribblets by the morning of May 8. I am afraid that there was some deliberation in all the fuss the Germans have made about publication—it resembles so very closely previous troubles. R. F. W. 18/5.'

No. 324

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received May 14, 6.45 p.m.)
No. 175 Telegraphic [C 3662/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, May 14, 1936, 3.36 p.m.

My telegram No. 172.¹

Chancellor received me this morning in the presence of Baron von Neurath and Herr von Ribbentrop. He asked that our conversation might be treated as confidential and not passed on to others.

¹ In this telegram of May 13, received 2.30 p.m., Sir E. Phipps stated that 'Chancellor has fixed midday May 14th for my interview'.

Atmosphere was very friendly, although the Chancellor began by deploring that leakage had made necessary publication of your despatch No. 542.² He then remarked that the new French Government would not be in the saddle before nearly the middle of June. If he were now to give me the German reply, it would have to be published, like your despatch, and several weeks would be given to the French to pick holes in it before there were any chances of beginning negotiations. He therefore proposed to hold up the reply until the formation of the new French Government was in sight.

Chancellor here made an outburst against Bolshevism and the alarming progress it was making in Spain and France: in the latter country chiefly owing to the unholy Russian alliance which would drag it down into the Bolshevik pit. He objected to our suggestion that he should extend non-aggression pacts to Russia and others who are not Germany's neighbours, and declared that we might as well ask him to conclude such pacts with South American or Asiatic States. He declared that he would not even have received a Soviet Ambassador here if he had not found one upon taking office. He had no intention whatever of attacking Russia, but angrily declined to conclude a pact with her. Moreover, she had had the effrontery to make herself into a neighbour of Germany by occupying large numbers of aerodromes in Czechoslovakia, and then suggesting a non-aggression pact. The Chancellor brushed aside my remark regarding Czechoslovakian denials and described them as lies.³

I turned to the air pact which the Chancellor said would be most desirable as stabilizing peace in that sensitive spot—the west of Europe; but we could not ask Germany to limit her air force vis-à-vis Western Powers without taking Russia's huge air force into account. His previous offers regarding limitation had been made 'before France had brought back Russia into Europe'. If limitation of arms may be general, and include as it must Russia and Japan, he would be ready to join an agreement, but in view of the lamentable failure of the Disarmament Conference he was highly sceptical of the possibility of success. He again urged general prohibition of bombing altogether as being far more practical.

The Chancellor made his usual outburst about *Gleichberechtigung*. He remarked that the Treaty of Versailles was divided into two parts, one dealing with the limitation of German sovereignty, which he had altered, and the other dealing with territorial clauses which could not be altered except by agreement.

I impressed upon the Chancellor how desirous His Majesty's Government were of reaching a comprehensive settlement, and told him that they would be only too glad to send a Cabinet Minister to Berlin to discuss matters with him if he wished. He thinks the moment for that has not yet arrived, but would welcome a British Minister later, particularly to explain to him what exactly His Majesty's Government have in mind over League reform.

² This should evidently have read '541', i.e. No. 307.

³ Cf. Nos. 85 and 87.

Will the reform for instance give the League more teeth or will it extract that body's present teeth? He himself had not yet made up his mind regarding this important question.

No. 325

Sir W. Selby (Vienna) to Foreign Office (Received May 14, 7 p.m.)

No. 40 Telegraphic [C 3647/4/18]

VIENNA, May 14, 1936, 3.45 p.m.

I learn from a reliable source that the former Heimwehr Minister Hueber, brother in law of General Goering, returned yesterday from Berlin where he had seen General Goering who is now regarded as the real power in Germany. He reports that General Goering, with knowledge of Herr Hitler and support of Herr von Papen, had decided to drop former Austrian policy of Nazi party and continue a policy of reconciliation with the present régime in Austria.

In this connexion agreement for export of wood and dairy products against Ruhr coal which has just been announced is significant.

Dr. Goebbels is still reported to be opposed to apparently new line of action of [*sic*] the part of the German Government.

General Goering and the Reichswehr are said to be now concentrating their attention in the direction of Russia and Baltic States and to be preparing for advance in that direction as soon as German military preparations are complete.¹

Repeated to Berlin telegram No. 3.

¹ In a minute addressed to Mr. Eden Sir R. Vansittart remarked: 'The statement that General Goering is now regarded as the real power in Germany is probably exaggerated, but there is a great deal of truth in it and it gains some colour from the recent subordination of Dr. Schacht to the General [see Nos. 282, 293, and 296]. . . I think you may wish briefly to draw your colleagues' attention to it at the next Cabinet. For the fact that the hotheads are really now in control of Germany is another reason why we should endeavour to move more quickly in the matter of our own rearmament than we are at present doing. R. V. 15th May, 1936.'

No. 326

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received May 14, 8.40 p.m.)

No. 176 Telegraphic [C 3663/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, May 14, 1936, 6.50 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I tried my best to reassure the Chancellor regarding probable desire of the

¹ No. 324.

new French Government to conclude reasonable arrangement with Germany. I also pointed out that nowhere so much as in France did Socialists pour water into their red wine after taking office. He remained unconvinced, however, and fears complete subservience to Moscow and spread of Communism in France.

I then asked the Chancellor what he thought of Italy's surprising victory in Abyssinia. He replied that he had always expected it, though not so soon. He then proceeded to expatiate upon the greatness and genius of Signor Mussolini, which we in England had never sufficiently realised. Sanctions, he said, were pure folly. They only served to weld a nation together: in fact they had helped more than anything else to bring about Signor Mussolini's astonishing victory. England was now faced by the Roman Empire. Instead of Sanctions she should have sent troops to Lake Tsana, should have staked out her vital sphere of interest there, and settled matters afterwards in a friendly way with Italy. I replied that England had not considered her own interests, but had joined in collective action against the aggressor. It was a religion in England that there should be no more aggression. Chancellor smiled pityingly 'With Dictators nothing succeeds like success' and Herr Hitler is clearly lost in admiration of Signor Mussolini. Before long he may have visions of a holy Roman Empire (plus a big colonial Empire) of his own.

Before leaving I made the Chancellor promise that he would let me know whenever he felt the time had arrived for a visit to Berlin of a British Minister to produce useful results.

No. 327

Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office (Received May 15, 11.5 a.m.)

No. 261 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 4368/3957/1]

ADDIS ABABA, May 14, 1936

My telegram No. 234.¹

French Minister having received instructions to call on Italian Commander-in-Chief, the doyen of the diplomatic body informed his colleagues that he proposed to do likewise.

I accordingly called on Marshal Badoglio yesterday² accompanied by senior members of my staff.

In referring to difficulties of march from North and excellent tenacity of his troops he described action of Emperor in attacking Italian positions at Lake Ashangi as 'su[i]cidal' though the Ethiopians fought bravely. He said the war was now at an end but task of dealing with brigandage and restoring order in the country would be long and heavy. (In conversation with my Turkish colleague he mentioned ten years).

¹ See No. 312, note 1.

² This telegram was drafted on May 13.

He asked about the withdrawal of our Legation guard and I replied that I was awaiting your instructions in the matter.³

His manner was pleasant, but he showed signs of fatigue and spoke of his hope of early leave to Italy.⁴

³ Cf. No. 312.

⁴ Foreign Office telegram No. 261 of May 20 informed Sir S. Barton that Mr. Eden now felt able 'to grant you leave of absence which you have so thoroughly deserved and which it has been necessary to withhold from you'. He was to leave Mr. P. M. Roberts, First Secretary at Addis Ababa, in charge.

No. 328

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received May 15, 1.15 p.m.)

No. 179 Telegraphic [C 3677/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, May 15, 1936, 12.11 p.m.

My telegram No. 175.¹

When on *Gleichberechtigung* Chancellor shouted that if anybody dared to suggest that he should not build fortifications on German soil he would tell them to mind their own business. What others did he had the right to do and if attempt were made again to impose any kind of discrimination upon Germany he would astonish the world by his strength.

Chancellor's manner between outbursts was perfectly friendly but my distinct impression continues to be generally as described in my despatch No. 1359² very confidential of December 19th last and in particular that he has no intention of binding himself in any way in present fluid state of Europe. My feeling also is that he will launch his reply when it best suits him and will publish it almost simultaneously. He indicated that he was not a 'bargainer' and thereby implied that his next reply would be final, to be taken en bloc or rejected. I did not believe that he really desires visit of a British Cabinet Minister here in the near future for it might render it more awkward for him to carry out above programme.³

¹ No. 324.

² Volume XV, No. 404.

³ Lengthy minutes commenting on this telegram and on Nos. 324 and 326 show exasperation and disappointment in the Foreign Office over Herr Hitler's attitude. 'Sir E. Phipps' report of this interview certainly creates an unpleasant impression. One only has to recall the praises with which Herr von Ribbentrop, and indeed Herr von Hoesch, introduced the German proposals of March 7th and March 31st . . . the first stage of which . . . could be negotiated within four months . . . from April 1st. Yet at that date the German Government were certainly just as well aware as we of the delays likely to be necessitated by the French elections; and now it is a feeble excuse to say that it is impossible to discuss even with us until the French Government is formed. It is, of course, as Sir E. Phipps points out, a matter of gaining time and seeing what happens as between Italy and ourselves, and perhaps launching some new coup before the negotiations can take place . . . This agreement with Germany is not going to give us any tangible advantage whatsoever except for the purpose of further lulling uninstructed opinion here. The Locarno Agreements were all very well 10 years ago: but in present circumstances I believe such agreements are dangerous as they

give Germany the chance to prevent our own defensive arrangements with France and Belgium from being adequate. Thus she is in a position to plead the principle of reciprocity. In Eastern Europe I cannot see that we have anything much to gain either by agreement with Germany. We are not in a position to cede things to her there for we have nothing to cede; and we may be quite certain that, as we have nothing to give her, she will not give us much in exchange. I only hope we shall not, in view of recent developments, buy her return to Geneva by a cession of colonies . . . R. F. Wigram. May 15th, 1936.' Sir R. Vansittart's lengthy comments included the following: ' . . . I wonder if anyone who knows his job really expected any other attitude than that, as Sir E. Phipps warns us once more & as clearly as usual, Hitler will not bind himself in a fluid Europe—fluid, that is, for an intending aggressor. He will play for time to avoid, on any pretext, giving to us a clear & reassuring answer . . . These telegrams strengthen my conviction that the two dictators will tend to be brought together not only by the similarity of their systems but by the similarity of their appetites . . . We shall have to go on with this exploration, though without illusions. If this is the spirit, I agree with Mr. Wigram that we shall get little advantage and only lull uninstructed opinion here . . . Also if this is the spirit, there can be no question whatever of any colonial cession. My paper early this year [Volume XV, Appendix IV(b)] was directed only toward a general comprehensive and abiding settlement. The point of the foregoing is that our rearmament is not proceeding fast enough or notoriously enough; and considerable doubt is being cast upon it abroad . . . R. V. May 17.' Mr. Eden wrote that it was necessary to 'consider the next step, for we cannot leave matters as they are. Personally I see some attraction in the offer of a visit of a Minister, if only because this would make it more difficult for Herr Hitler to take refuge in evasion, & would show our public our determination to get on if we can . . . A. E. May 18.'

No. 329

Mr. Eden¹ to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 898 [C 3692/92/62]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 15, 1936*

Sir,

I called upon M. Flandin at his house in Paris this morning. I found him looking far from well, and he stated that he would have to undergo an operation for his arm in June when some bits of bone had to be removed, after which he hoped that it would at length begin to heal.

2. I began by thanking M. Flandin for agreeing to my seeing M. Blum,² and he at once stated that he was very glad I was to have an opportunity to do this for he was sure it would be most helpful. He himself had had some conversation with M. Blum, and he felt sure that his intentions were good. The only question was whether he would be allowed by his more extreme followers to carry out these intentions in their entirety. In the meanwhile M. Flandin considered that the new French Government would last longer than many political observers in France were prepared to admit. He himself thought it would last a year, and he hoped it would last eighteen months, for there was much work to be done internally which a Socialist Government would be particularly well placed to carry out. So far as his foreign

¹ Mr. Eden returned to London from Paris by air on the evening of May 15.

² See No. 330 below.

policy was concerned, M. Blum had not yet decided who would be his Foreign Minister. He was still pressing M. Herriot very hard, but the latter had not so far agreed to accept the post. M. Flandin appeared to think the most likely outcome was that at the last minute M. Herriot would accept. It appears that there is some personal ill feeling between M. Blum and M. Paul-Boncour, and M. Flandin was convinced that the latter would not be appointed Foreign Minister if M. Blum could possibly avoid it. If, however, M. Paul-Boncour were ruled out and M. Herriot would not accept, it was difficult indeed to see who could be found to go to the Quai d'Orsay.

3. M. Flandin stated that he thought I would find M. Blum reasonable to deal with in foreign affairs, but he hoped himself that we should soon be able to liquidate the Italo-Abyssinian affair, otherwise he feared lest we and the French Government should start an international auction, the latter asking us to bid for their support in the Abyssinian affair in return for support from us for every kind of *idéologie en Europe*. The Socialist party in France were strong supporters of all forms of protocols, but these were not practical politics at this time.

4. M. Flandin then repeated to me what M. Blum had told him he had said at his interview with Mr. Attlee.³ M. Blum had made it plain that the Labour Party in England must not look to the new French Government to ask for an increase of sanctions, nor would the new French Government seek to embarrass His Majesty's Government through the Socialists in London. M. Flandin was quite confident that M. Blum's assurances in this respect could be fully accepted.

5. M. Flandin then asked me how I now proposed to deal with the Abyssinian problem. Did I propose to have any exchanges of views with Rome direct? I replied that that was certainly not our intention at present. He then stated that there were two matters as to which he wished to consult me in order that he might if possible follow the same course. First, we had both received a communication announcing Italy's annexation of Abyssinia and the crowning of the King as Emperor.⁴ In this connection M. Flandin referred to his conversation with the Italian Ambassador, of which M. Paul-Boncour had given me the enclosed record.⁵ What reply was now to be sent to this intimation? We discussed several alternatives, and agreed that the best form was merely to acknowledge it under reserves which would include the possibility of a further reply later. M. Flandin was anxious in addition to add a reserve under the 1906 Treaty, for he said that he feared that the annexation, and the new form of Government that had been set up as a part of it, might be held later by the Italian Government to have overridden any previous undertaking. I replied that I would consider this point, but I was not myself anxious to make any representations under the 1906 Treaty, for I feared that this could easily be misinterpreted and H[is] M[ajesty's]

³ See No. 330 below, paragraph 3[4]. Mr. Attlee visited Paris and had a conversation with M. Blum on May 9; see *The Times*, May 11, 1936, p. 12.

⁴ Cf. No. 312, note 1.

⁵ Not printed.

Government did not wish to appear as being anxious to obtain what they could from the unhappy Abyssinian corpse. M. Flandin fully agreed that this possibility ought to be fully guarded against, and I undertook to consider further the form of this reply and to communicate with M. Flandin through the French Ambassador in London.

6. The second matter which M. Flandin wished to discuss was the withdrawal of the troops which we and the French Government had sent to Diredawa and Addis Ababa. What reply were we returning to the Italian request for a reduction of these garrisons? He thought it desirable that we should act together. I replied that I fully concurred with this desire which I knew to be also that of Sir S. Barton.⁶ M. Flandin suggested that perhaps we could both reply that our additional reinforcements sent into Abyssinia last autumn would be withdrawn. This, I understood, would leave the French with some forty men at Addis Ababa and would leave us with our original Legation guard. On this subject also I undertook to send a message to the French Government as soon as possible.

7. We then came back to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. In this connection M. Flandin maintained that the Mediterranean Pact, which he had first proposed to me when he came to London last January,⁷ was the only possible solution. The anxieties of the small Powers in the Mediterranean were now serious, and he was convinced that both His Majesty's Government and France would gain materially from such a Pact, and he did not think that Italy could refuse to sign it. In his view it would not be wise to negotiate the pact without Italy and then ask her to sign later, for S[ignor] Mussolini would probably then refuse to do so just as Herr Hitler had always maintained that he would not sign a treaty handed to him already made. The essential decision which we all had now to come to was whether or not the Mediterranean was an area of the world where we had a vital interest. He was himself confident that Article 16 would never be applied again where there were no vital interests, but if our interests in the Mediterranean were vital then we should all stand to gain by the negotiation of a pact which would do much to steady the European situation.

8. M. Flandin showed himself profoundly pessimistic as to the attitude which the Chancellor of the German Reich would take up towards the questionnaire.⁸ He thought that the answer would be delayed as long as possible, and that Herr Hitler might come out with a new economic and financial programme in order to avoid answering our questions. He had heard that experts in both these Departments had been very busy in Berlin of late, and he had thought it right to warn M. Blum of this, so that he might make some mention of these matters in advance in his speech today⁹ and thus to some extent cut the ground from under Herr Hitler's feet if he were thinking of such a method for avoiding answers to the vital questions which had been put to him. M. Flandin further showed a conviction that Germany and Italy would come together before long. I replied that I had some

⁶ Cf. No. 314.

⁷ See Volume XV, No. 484.

⁸ See No. 307.

⁹ See *The Times*, May 16, 1936, p. 14.

difficulty in believing this since both Herr Hitler and S[ignor] Mussolini wished to play the major rôle in Central Europe, and there was scarcely room for the two men in so confined an area. M. Flandin admitted this, but maintained that Central Europe was of small account when compared with world dominion as represented by the vast possessions of the British Empire and of France. In these circumstances it might not be impossible for the two dictators to compromise about Central Europe in order that they might gain their larger objectives elsewhere.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

No. 330

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 899 [C 3693/92/62]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 15, 1936*

Sir,

I had an opportunity for informal conversation this morning with M. Blum,¹ whom I had only met once before, at Sir Charles Mendl's flat in Paris. M. Blum, who was very cordial in his welcome, impressed me as being sincere in the emphasis which he laid upon his belief in Anglo-French co-operation. In this respect he should be an improvement on his predecessors for he clearly has no love of dictatorships wherever they may be. On the other hand he struck me as being somewhat doctrinaire in his outlook and he has of course never held office in any Government before.

2. M. Blum asserted that it was essential that our two countries should work together. This was the indispensable foundation upon which all else depended. I replied that I was in full agreement with this and was glad to be able to tell him so within the first few minutes of our first meeting. At the same time M. Blum would appreciate that the chief objective of British foreign policy was to bring about an agreement between the three great Powers of Western Europe. I would therefore ask for his help in this task and more particularly in our efforts to bring about a negotiation with Germany.

[3.] M. Blum, who raised no objection to this, somewhat surprised me by commenting that he understood that the Soviet Government wished for this policy. I replied that this was far from being my impression since the Soviets were more likely to be apprehensive than otherwise of a settlement in Western Europe since they feared—though wrongly—that this left them more exposed in the East. M. Blum showed no enthusiasm for a new Locarno, which he seemed to think a retrograde step as compared with Sir Samuel Hoare's speech of last September² which visualised persistent resistance to aggression wherever it might take place. M. Blum indeed expressed

¹ Cf. No. 329.

² Volume XIV, Appendix IV.

his preference for a Locarno which would apply to Europe as a whole and is still an advocate of the Protocol of 1924.³ I remarked that whatever might be the best conception of collective security, and as to this it was clear that every nation should be willing to play its full part everywhere, I was afraid that one of the lessons which must be learnt from recent events was that nations would not in fact take steps that involved a major risk of war unless their own national interests were directly affected. M. Blum assented to this and stated that it was on this account that he was still so anxious to secure international disarmament. Without that neither the Protocol nor collective security could work effectively. Did I not agree? I replied that, while fully sharing M. Blum's conception of the ideal to be aimed at, it seemed to me hardly attainable at present in a world in which dictatorships played so large a part. M. Blum somewhat reluctantly assented.

3 [4]. M. Blum then spoke to me in the frankest terms of his relations with the Labour Party in England. He said that he was anxious that from the first there should be no possibility of misunderstanding on this subject. He was a Socialist and naturally had had friendly relations with the Labour Party in England. But he had explained to Mr. Attlee when he visited him⁴ that in no circumstances would he work with the English Labour Party in order to embarrass His Majesty's Government. No country would tolerate for a moment action by a party from abroad which constituted interference in its own domestic politics. Not for a moment would M. Blum consider indulging in such practices; nor indeed had Mr. Attlee even hinted that he should. (It is being stated in Paris that Mr. Attlee's visit was in fact something of an embarrassment to M. Blum and his supporters and there is some comment on the fact that Mr. Attlee and Mr. Baker did not visit the British Embassy at any time during their stay.)

4 [5]. We then discussed the situation created by the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. M. Blum asked me what were the views of His Majesty's Government, since he was most anxious to conform to them if possible. I replied that I had not yet had an opportunity for consultation with my colleagues and I was anxious for a little leisure to turn over in my mind the outcome of the many conversations which I had had in Geneva in the last few days. At the same time I could not fail to notice that many people at Geneva thought that the League would be faced in June with two alternatives. The first was that we should say that we had in no way modified our original attitude to this dispute, that we were not prepared to modify our original verdict about aggression or to recognise its fruits, and that we were determined to maintain, and if necessary increase, existing sanctions until Italy was willing to negotiate a peace upon terms within the framework of the League and in the spirit of the Covenant. There were two difficulties in this course. The first was that if it was successfully prosecuted it would almost certainly lead to war; the second was that in view of the collapse of

³ i.e. the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, adopted by the League Assembly on October 2, 1924, and printed as item No. 3 in Cmd. 2273 of 1924; cf. Series Ia, Volume I, p. 7.

⁴ Cf. No. 329, note 3.

Abyssinia and the Emperor's flight the task of restoring anything like the status quo ante in Abyssinia would become a prodigious one. The second alternative was to admit that sanctions had failed to attain their object, but to refuse to recognise Italy's conquest or to revoke the League's previous verdict upon her actions and to consider what if anything could be done to organise a more secure order of things in the Mediterranean. M. Blum did not appear to be much attracted to either of these courses. France would not be able to propose the former though she would concur in it if the League wished for it. Incidentally, he added that he was not so certain about the danger of war; there was certainly a grave risk. He was convinced that six months ago war would not have broken out had the League proceeded to more extreme measures for he was sure that there was a considerable element of bluff in Signor Mussolini's make-up. On the other hand, M. Blum declared that he definitely did not want to raise sanctions as his first act as Prime Minister. He would prefer to keep them on for a while. I replied that some felt that they should be kept on until the meeting of the Assembly in September, the argument being that such a decision could only be taken by the League's most representative body. At the same time the difficulty of this course, which appeared to appeal somewhat to M. Blum, was that the nations might well ask, as M. Sandler⁵ had asked, what were these sanctions then being kept on for.

5 [6]. M. Blum then referred to the Mediterranean Pact. Was it the conception that we should negotiate one with Italy, or that we should negotiate one apart from Italy? The two propositions were entirely distinct. He saw that there might be serious embarrassment in calling off sanctions and negotiating a Mediterranean Pact with Italy. At the same time the countries in the Mediterranean who were clearly nervous were entitled to some measure of protection, more particularly if they were in danger of being victims on account of the action they had taken in enforcing sanctions. Would it not be possible to combine the maintenance of sanctions with the negotiation of a Mediterranean Pact? I replied that I had gathered that something of this kind had appeared to be in M. Avenol's mind from the course of a conversation which I had had with him yesterday. Certainly if this course were pursued, it would have this advantage that since Italy would not presumably be present at Geneva while sanctions were in force, a Mediterranean Pact, were it thought it desirable to negotiate one (on this subject I was quite ignorant at present of the view of His Majesty's Government), could be negotiated in the absence of Italy and Italy could be asked to sign it if she thought fit. Another advantage of this proposal would be that it would constitute an initiative by the British and French Governments and might be supposed therefore to do something to restore their authority in the Mediterranean. M. Blum concluded that if we could get a Mediterranean Pact and a new Locarno, and if eventually we could get Hitler to agree to an Eastern Pact, then nearly all Europe would be in a system of collective security and we could breathe more freely.

⁵ Swedish Foreign Minister.

6 [7]. M. Blum showed some apprehension at Sir Austen Chamberlain's speech⁶ and at a trend of British public opinion which he feared indicated that we proposed to abandon our leadership of the League. He hoped that this would not be so, since then the French Government would be thrust into a lead at Geneva. He thought any rivalry of this kind would be bad. I replied that I hoped we should move in step in future which was far preferable to either of us being in the van.

7 [8]. M. Blum agreed and commented on the difference of outlook between public opinions in France and Great Britain. Apparently some people in Great Britain were criticising His Majesty's Government for their failure to lead in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute. In France, however, M. Blum declared, 'you are regarded as a sanctionist Power *par excellence*. Clearly, therefore, I cannot take a lead in advance of what you would be prepared to do. My public would never understand that at all.'

8 [9]. In reference to the relations of Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler, M. Blum expressed his conviction that it would not be possible to keep these two Dictators apart. Sooner or later their policies would converge. He was afraid that British public opinion was at the moment making the same mistake about Herr Hitler as French public opinion had made about Italy: the latter had attempted to secure Signor Mussolini's support against Herr Hitler, and now it looked as though we were attempting to secure Herr Hitler's support against Signor Mussolini. I replied that no intention of the kind was in our mind. All that we wished to do was to rebuild the structure of peace in Western Europe. I was convinced that the conception of playing off one dictator against another had never entered the mind of the British public.

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

⁶ On May 6 in the House of Commons; see 311 *H.C. Deb. 5 s.*, cols. 1767-73.

No. 331

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 19, 7.25 p.m.)

No. 181 Telegraphic [C 3746/4/18]

BERLIN, May 19, 1936, 6.30 p.m.

I hear on excellent authority that Dr. Goebbels is carrying on a mischievous campaign against any binding agreement between Germany and other European Powers.

He is trying to convince Chancellor that Germany has everything to gain by keeping her hands free or at any rate by deferring discussions as much as possible.

He has been convinced for years he says that Versailles Powers were carrying on a policy of bluff towards Germany. They embarked on the same policy

towards Signor Mussolini who being himself a gambler promptly called their bluff.

His sentiments appear more hostile to Great Britain than to France. England he says is real cause of trouble between Germany and her European neighbours. Without British encouragement an agreement would long ago have been reached with France.

He reserves his bitterest strictures for colonial question. Great Britain is he says behaving like the dog in the manger: not only does she not exploit her own colonies but she will not allow anybody else to exploit them. She produces arguments to show that Colonies are of no value economically or for colonisation which is best reason for surrendering them to countries like Germany who hold the opposite view.

Chancellor listens to these tirades but so far he merely points out that Herr von Ribbentrop¹ and Baron von Neurath are his advisers on foreign affairs.

¹ According to Dr. T. Jones's account in *A Diary with Letters 1931-1950*, pp. 194-202, 208, 214-16, and 223-4, Herr von Ribbentrop had great hopes at this period of a meeting between Herr Hitler and Mr. Baldwin. To further this end he invited Dr. Jones on May 11, through a Count Dürckheim, to visit him privately in Berlin. The visit took place from May 15-17; he was then flown to Munich, where he had an interview of an hour and a half with the Führer in his flat on the morning of 17th. Herr Hitler, who was dressed in his Sunday best, spoke of his peaceful aims and his desire to meet Mr. Baldwin. Dr. Jones gave this message to Mr. Baldwin on May 20, and elaborated his own views in further conversation with Mr. Baldwin at Chequers on May 23. It appears that Mr. Baldwin was interested in the plan but was not prepared to go against the advice of Mr. Eden, whom he told on May 20 'we must get nearer to Germany'. A fortnight later Mr. Eden told him that Herr Hitler's object was to 'divide us from the French' and that it was 'most important that he should be given no occasion to cloud the issue. . .'. Some days more went by, and on June 16 an agent of Ribbentrop's pressed Dr. Jones for a decision. It seems that the matter was discussed at a meeting late that evening, when the project was virtually abandoned owing to Mr. Eden's objections. During the course of the discussions the idea of a meeting in a boat off Dover had been mooted. Mr. Baldwin at some points seems to have been willing to go to Berlin, but on the condition that Mr. Eden should accompany him. Cf. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 374, and some extra detail in Middlemas and Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 955-8, quoting Dr. Jones's diary.

No. 332

Mr. Lloyd Thomas (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received May 19, 9.45 p.m.)

No. 217 Telegraphic [J 4527/33/1]

Immediate

PARIS, May 19, 1936, 8.38 p.m.

My telegram No. 215.¹

Monsieur Léger told me this afternoon that Italian Ambassador had called

¹ In this telegram of May 17 to the Foreign Office Sir G. Clerk mentioned a statement at the Quai d'Orsay that it might be thought necessary to retain 'say fifty men instead of the usual ten at Addis Ababa to protect the French Legation and a corresponding number at Dire Dawa for the protection of the French Consulate'. Cf. Nos. 314, 327, and 329, para. 6.

on him this morning and had asked (1) that the French Government would allow Jibuti railway to be used for transport of troops and supplies to Addis Ababa and (2) that soldiers sent to reinforce Legation Guard and the two companies of Askaris at Diredawa should be withdrawn. Monsieur Léger had replied to Italian Ambassador that the French Government were unable to grant either of these requests, as they did not recognise annexation of Abyssinia and could not therefore admit right of Italian Government to make such demands. They took their stand on basis of strict neutrality and while the French Government undertook only to employ their troops for protection of French lives and property, they could not allow Jibuti Railway to be used by a belligerent State.²

Repeated to Rome and Addis Ababa.

² In his telegram No. 280 of May 19 to the Foreign Office, Sir S. Barton referred to the possibility that the Italian position might prove precarious, in which case 'the danger to all other foreigners will be far greater than it has ever been'. He felt therefore that 'it would not be prudent to dispense with the British and French detachments as yet, and that we should wait for a further consolidation of the Italian position before taking a decision'. Sir S. Barton was informed in Foreign Office telegram No. 267 of May 21 that in view of his representations and of the French attitude Mr. Eden had decided 'for the present and until situation is more settled not to acquiesce in the Italian suggestion for the withdrawal of the extra detachment. Italian Ambassador is being informed accordingly.'

No. 333

Colonial Office to Sir A. Wauchope (Jerusalem)

No. 211 Telegraphic¹ [J 4175/3249/1]

Most Important

COLONIAL OFFICE, May 19, 1936

Your telegram No. 225.²

Please inform the Emperor that (1) His Majesty's Government have no objection to His Majesty coming to England provided that he travels incognito and that his suite is strictly limited, say to six persons, (2) His Majesty's Government will be prepared to offer the Emperor a passage in one of His Majesty's Ships but only as far as Gibraltar owing to the impossibility of sending a ship further west on account of service requirements at the present time. The Emperor must therefore make his own arrangements for himself and party from Gibraltar to this country.

¹ This telegram was drafted in the Foreign Office with Mr. Eden's approval and despatched by the Colonial Office.

² In this telegram to the Colonial Office of May 15 Sir A. Wauchope said that the Emperor of Ethiopia, following the earlier statements as to His Majesty's Government being unwilling that he should come to London (cf. No. 302), asked whether he might 'be permitted to travel to an English port in a British vessel (P. and O. for example) where he would not remain but would leave at once for Geneva. He has explained that he fears that to land at Marseilles with its mixed population, might jeopardise his life'.

Since the above was drafted your telegram No. 237¹ has been received. If the Emperor as implied therein now finds it necessary to travel to a sanatorium anywhere in Europe His Majesty's Government will certainly raise no objection. You should so inform him adding an expression of Mr. Eden's personal regret that His Majesty's health renders this necessary.

Please report as soon as possible His Majesty's eventual decision.

¹ This telegram of May 18 to the Colonial Office said that it was 'the wish of the Emperor of Abyssinia to travel to some sanatorium in Europe without delay; Germany has been suggested.'

No. 334

Mr. Eden to Sir M. Lampson (Cairo)

No. 266 Telegraphic [J 4384/3249/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 20, 1936, 4.45 p.m.*

Following for Khartoum.

Your telegram No. 67¹ to Cairo.

Please forward following message to Erskine.²

Your position during the next few months may be a difficult one and the following instructions are sent for your guidance.

(1) You should confine your activities to co-operating with the local authorities in the preservation of order and in securing the safety of British and, so far as is possible, other foreign residents in your district. You should on no account associate yourself with any measures which may be taken for continuing military resistance to Italians;

(2) You should continue to address your reports on matters with which you are thus authorised to deal to the Legation at Addis Ababa repeating to me through Khartoum. Reports on political and military developments should be addressed directly to me and not even repeated to Addis Ababa.

Crown Prince is in Jerusalem with the Emperor.

Sir S. Barton is being informed of these instructions.

¹ This telegram of May 15 from Captain Esme Nourse Erskine, M.C., the British Consul for Western Ethiopia (Gore), was repeated to the Foreign Office in Sir M. Lampson's telegram No. 435, of even date. It included the statement by Captain Erskine, 'Crown Prince is said to be near Gore and officials are making arrangements for his arrival'.

² Mr. Peterson minuted on May 18: 'Mr. Erskine is an admirably active, but rather wild, official . . . We must therefore (a) restrain him (in another tel. he has referred to himself as "controlling Western Ethiopia"), and (b) prevent him sending to Addis Ababa, i.e. to the Italians, information about Abyssinian movements in the west.' The latter provision was because Captain Erskine possessed limited code and cypher facilities.

*Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)**No. 591 [C 3466/4/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 21, 1936*

Sir,

The German Chargé d'Affaires called on Lord Cranborne on the 7th May to discuss the blue-book entitled *Correspondence showing the Course of Certain Diplomatic Discussions directed towards Securing an European Settlement* (Cmd. 5143).¹

2. Prince Bismarck said that, without wishing to make his visit a formal one, he desired to point out that the blue-book had left an unfortunate impression upon the German Government as being calculated to throw the blame for the failure to secure the conclusion of the Eastern and Air Pacts on Germany, and to give the impression that German policy throughout the period covered by the blue-book had shown a consistent tendency, having as its natural culmination the events of the 7th March.² Lord Cranborne replied that, in issuing the blue-book, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom had not intended to pass any judgment upon the attitude of the German Government. They had merely published a number of documents designed to make clear to British opinion the steps taken by His Majesty's Government during the period in question to come to some settlement in Europe. That His Majesty's Government were fully entitled to do.

3. Prince Bismarck, who frequently referred during his interview with Lord Cranborne to a document which seemed to be his instructions from the German Government, but of which he did not leave a copy—as he explained that it was of a somewhat controversial nature—then made the following detailed points in support of the general contention referred to above:

- (1) He pointed out that the blue-book did not do justice to the difficulties which had been placed in the way of reaching agreement between the European Powers by the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. The fact that this dispute had been concurrent with the period of negotiation had presented a real difficulty, in view of Italy's position as a Great European Power and, more particularly, as a guarantor of the Locarno agreements.
- (2) He mentioned that no reference was made to the approach which the French Government had made to His Majesty's Government in the autumn of 1935 with the aim of concerting measures for assistance in the event of France's north-eastern frontier being threatened. Lord Cranborne maintained that the Franco-British Staff talks of last autumn had been entirely concerned with providing against contingencies which might arise out of the situation in the Mediterranean.
- (3) Prince Bismarck called attention to document 13 (notes of the Stresa

¹ *Miscellaneous No. 3 (1936)*.² Cf. No. 33.

meeting of the 12th April, 1935),³ and suggested that this document showed that His Majesty's Government were already aware that negotiations were being carried on for a Franco-Soviet Pact before the Stresa meeting took place. The same document contained the German assurance that Germany was prepared to enter into an Eastern multilateral non-aggression pact, notwithstanding the fact that some of the signatories of that pact might wish to conclude separate agreements of mutual assistance between themselves. The blue-book, said Prince Bismarck, did not make it clear that it was very natural that Germany's subsequent discovery of the existence of negotiations for a Franco-Soviet Pact should lead her to modify her views as to the value of an Eastern Pact on the lines which she had indicated.

- (4) He said that the attitude of the German Government towards the proposals for an European settlement contained in the London *communiqué* of the 3rd February, 1935,⁴ had naturally been altered by the passage of the Geneva resolution of the 17th April, 1935,⁵ condemning German rearmament, and that no allowance in respect of this was made in the blue-book.
- (5) Prince Bismarck argued that the fact that the four Locarno Powers other than Germany had almost simultaneously informed the German Government that they saw no incompatibility between the terms of the Franco-Soviet Pact and those of the Locarno Agreement showed that there must have been consultation, if not prearrangement, between those Powers. The blue-book, however, contained no documents dealing with these consultations.
- (6) He emphasised that the German Government had really been willing, after the issue of the London *communiqué* of the 3rd February, 1935, to agree to the conclusion of an Air Pact, and that it was only owing to the Franco-Soviet Pact that their decision in this matter had been postponed. Yet the impression created by the blue-book was definitely that Germany had never really been willing to conclude an Air Pact.
- (7) He made some rather obscure reference to bilateral pacts, and seemed to claim that these bilateral pacts would only be genuinely concluded as between France, Belgium and Great Britain. Lord Cranborne contested this suggestion, pointing out that the bilateral pacts were intended to buttress the Air Pact, and that His Majesty's Government had only agreed to the proposal for bilateral pacts on this condition, and on condition that they were mutual in scope, including, of course, Germany.
- (8) Prince Bismarck said that no mention was made of the fact that a very serious, if not fatal, obstacle in the way of the conclusion of an

³ Cf. Volume XII, No. 722, for the complete minutes of the Stresa Conference. The passage quoted as document 13 of the Command Paper appears on pp. 884-5 of that volume.

⁴ See *ibid.*, No. 400, note 4 and Annex.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Nos. 722 and 732.

Air Pact had been that France had insisted on the simultaneous discussion of all the points comprised in the London *communiqué* of the 3rd February, 1935, and that His Majesty's Government had been forced to agree. The blue-book did not bring this out.

4. Prince Bismarck then made some general observations on the question of the Air Pact. The German Government had never been opposed to the conclusion of an Air Pact in principle. They had felt, however, that the pact was not at one time practicable. Such a pact must be concluded on the basis of Locarno. That meant the inclusion of Italy, which was impossible during the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. Yet it would have been exceedingly difficult for Germany to conclude an Air Pact in which Italy had no part. Germany was not a party to the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, nor was she a member of the League, and it could only therefore be considered an offensive act on her part if she were to proceed on a basis of excluding Italy.

5. Nor, added Prince Bismarck, had his Government refused the idea of a limitation of air armaments. But there was a practical difficulty. The existence of the Franco-Soviet Pact made it necessary that the joint forces of France and Russia should be taken into consideration in fixing any figure for limitation.

6. Prince Bismarck then advanced the view that the communication of His Majesty's Government contained in my conversation with Herr von Hoesch on the 6th March⁶ had come too late. Lord Cranborne pointed out the obvious difficulties which had lain in the way of this communication being made at an earlier date, and Prince Bismarck was subsequently reminded of the very important communications made to the German Embassy and to the German Government also in January and February of this year (documents Nos. 47, 48, 50, 51 and 52 of the blue-book).⁷

7. In order that there might be less possibility of the German Government asserting at some later date, as they have had a tendency to do in somewhat similar cases, that their criticisms had been left without a detailed answer because in fact no adequate answer was possible, it was thought well to ask Prince Bismarck to call again at the Foreign Office to discuss in somewhat greater detail some of the points he had made.⁸ This second interview took place on the 13th May.

8. With regard to the first point of detail made by him to Lord Cranborne, the difficulty raised for the negotiations between the Western Powers by the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, Prince Bismarck was told that we did not share the view that that dispute had necessarily rendered these negotiations impossible.

9. The second point made by him—that of the alleged demand made by

⁶ Cf. No. 29.

⁷ These correspond to Nos. 433, 450, 486, 529, and 538 of Volume XV.

⁸ Mr. Wigram submitted a memorandum of May 9 rebutting Prince Bismarck's statements. Lord Cranborne left for Geneva that day, after suggesting that a reply to Prince Bismarck's statements was needed. On Sir R. Vansittart's instructions, Mr. Wigram conducted the second conversation with Prince Bismarck.

the French Government for assistance from the United Kingdom in the event of a threat to the French north-eastern frontier—was, however, one of much greater importance. In referring to the approach made by the French Government on this matter in the autumn of 1935, did Prince Bismarck mean that the German Government still entertained doubt respecting the sincerity of the assurance given by me to the late German Ambassador on the 6th January (my despatch No. 25 to Berlin of the 6th January)?⁹ That assurance had been that there was no truth in the reports that, in return for the help we had asked of the French Government in the Mediterranean, the French representatives at the Staff conversations in December¹⁰ had asked us to take certain steps for the defence of the French north-eastern frontier. Prince Bismarck replied that there was certainly no intention on the part of the German Government to call in question the assurance which I had given to Herr von Hoesch on the 6th January and which he admitted had been repeated to Baron von Neurath by your Excellency at a subsequent date. He said, however, that he understood that assurance to relate only to the Staff conversations and not to the discussions which had taken place between the French Government and His Majesty's Government in the earlier autumn of 1935. He said that he believed there was something on the point in a note which it was understood that the French Government had communicated to us on the 19th October,¹¹ but which had not been published. Though he was, of course, not given a copy, Prince Bismarck was asked to read over the note in question ('Abyssinia' Print: October 19, Section 1), and he was obliged to admit that his suspicions were quite unfounded. He was told that references to the anxieties of the French Government respecting the working of mutual assistance in Europe were to be found in the British note of the 26th September, 1935,¹² and in the French note of the 5th October last.¹³ Both these documents had been published. Neither of them related specifically to the French north-eastern frontier; and there had been nothing in any other communications in the autumn relating to provision by this country of defence for the French north-eastern frontier. Prince Bismarck said that in that case he had no more to say on this subject.

10. His attention was then drawn to the third point which he had mentioned to Lord Cranborne: his reference to the Franco-Soviet Pact. When told that not only were His Majesty's Government aware of these negotiations before Stresa, but that the German Government were well aware of them themselves and, indeed, every other country in Europe, Prince Bismarck seemed inclined to say that his enquiry of Lord Cranborne had been misunderstood. He did not seem to wish to explain what his enquiry or criticism had really been intended to imply.

11. As regards the fourth point made to Lord Cranborne, Prince Bismarck

⁹ Not printed; cf. however *D.G.F.P.*, vol. iv, No. 484.

¹⁰ See Volume XV, Appendix II.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, No. 115.

¹² See Volume XIV, No. 650, Appendix.

¹³ See Volume XV, No. 27, Enclosure.

was reminded that the Geneva resolution of the 17th April, 1935, had been published at the time, and everyone was well aware of its existence as well as of the German unilateral repudiation of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles on the 16th March, 1935.¹⁴ It was the latter which had really upset the basis of negotiations proposed in the February *communiqué*.

12. As regards point (5), the compatibility of the Franco-Soviet Pact with the Treaty of Locarno, Prince Bismarck was told that, as was natural, there had certainly been consultation between the British, French, Belgian and Italian Governments before their communications on this subject, and that it might have been useful if the German Government had consulted with those Governments more fully on the matter before taking up their own position.

13. As regards point (6), the effect of the Franco-Soviet Pact on the Air Pact, Prince Bismarck was reminded that the German Government had not made this point clear in the summer of 1935, and that in July 1935 they had said that the postponement of the discussions on the Air Pact was due to the holidays.¹⁵

14. Prince Bismarck seemed unable to explain the reference which he had made in his conversation with Lord Cranborne to bilateral pacts; and he did not seem to wish to discuss the matter.

15. With regard to his contention that France had insisted upon simultaneous discussion of all the points in the London *communiqué* (point (8)), his attention was drawn to document 32 in the blue-book,¹⁶ which clearly indicates that the French Government were ready to open the discussion of the Air Pact, apart altogether from the discussion of the other questions. Their reserve was on the matter of its conclusion.

16. Finally, Prince Bismarck was told that it was true that some of these points were of minor importance, though his reference to the French request for British assistance in respect of the French north-eastern frontier was certainly not so. The purpose of this second conversation had, however, been to make it quite clear that His Majesty's Government had adequate replies to all the points which he had raised with Lord Cranborne, and that this was being made clear lest at some future date it should be said that His Majesty's Government had been unable to reply to these points. Prince Bismarck said that at least by the German Embassy he was sure that no such statement would be made. He said that he hoped that this closed the discussion on the blue-book.

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

¹⁴ See Volume XII, No. 570.

¹⁵ Cf. Volume XIII, No. 440.

¹⁶ This corresponds to Volume XII, No. 436.

*Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)**No. 611 [C 3677/4/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 23, 1936*

Sir,

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have had under careful consideration Your Excellency's telegrams Nos. 175, 176 and 179¹ of May 14th and 15th in which you report your interview with the German Chancellor on the subject of the communication contained in my despatch No. 541² of May 6th respecting the general negotiations proposed in the German Government's memoranda of March 7th, 24th and 31st.³ In this interview Herr Hitler stated that he did not propose to communicate his reply until the formation of the new French Government was in sight.⁴

2. I will not conceal from Your Excellency that His Majesty's Government are disappointed by the delay in replying to their communication as they were anxious to elucidate as speedily as possible the points which were not clear to them in the German Government's Memoranda of March 7th, 24th and 31st, in order that the general negotiations might be opened and a permanent solution found for the continuing situation created by the German Government's action of March 7th. It does not seem to His Majesty's Government that it is necessary for this purpose to await the formation of the French Government, as their communication was addressed to the German Government on the responsibility of His Majesty's Government alone.

¹ Nos. 325, 326, and 328; cf. No. 328, note 3.

² No. 307.

³ See Nos. 42, Enclosure, 163, note 2, and 193, note 2.

⁴ Herr Hitler's attitude was discussed at a Cabinet meeting on May 20. There was general agreement that it would be a mistake to press him to receive a British Minister. Mr. Eden explained that the great objection to delay for another two or three weeks was that it meant withholding from the French and Belgians the information as to his refusal to undertake not to refortify the Rhineland. There were a number of arguments for and against early action, but Mr. Eden pointed out that if German refortification became a fact 'we should be in an awkward position vis-à-vis the French and Belgian Governments'. The Cabinet finally agreed to his proposal that a despatch should be sent to Sir E. Phipps, in which should be embodied some of the reasons why the failure to secure a reply was embarrassing to the British Government. Mr. Eden was asked to show the draft of this despatch to Ministers interested. These were Mr. Baldwin, Sir Kingsley Wood, Mr. N. Chamberlain, Mr. J. R. MacDonald, and Sir J. Simon. Herr Hitler's statement about the Rhineland refortification to Sir E. Phipps on May 14 (see No. 328) was confirmed in a statement by General von Geyr, the German Military Attaché in London, to Major General Dill, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, on May 18. 'General von Geyr said that it was, under existing conditions, intended to fortify the Rhineland only within the limits essential to the security of Germany: if, however, the staff conversations between Great Britain, France, and Belgium were renewed, this policy would have to be reconsidered.' Colonel B. Paget, in a letter to Mr. Wigram of May 19, said that General Dill had given 'an assurance that in passing [this information] on to other Departments he would emphasize its secrecy and that on no account must it be given away to the press or to any foreign country'. Comments on file C 3761/4/18 show that the Foreign Office was 'very uneasy' over this enforced secrecy.

Whilst consideration must of course be given to the change in the French Government, His Majesty's Government are sure that the German Government will see that it will be a relief and assurance to the nations of Europe to know that our two Governments are assiduously working to remove the obstacles which have caused, and will continue to cause until removed, delays in opening the general negotiations, and that we have used these latter weeks in obtaining replies ready for the new French Government to study, so soon as they assume office. In their Memoranda of March 7th and 31st the German Government showed themselves anxious to secure a permanent solution of the present situation. That anxiety is fully shared by His Majesty's Government. Indeed, notwithstanding the delays which, it was even then clear, would be caused by the impending French elections, the German Government, in their Memorandum of March 31st, themselves proposed a limit of four months for the conclusion of the negotiations respecting the western non-aggression and guarantee arrangements, non-aggression treaties in the centre and east of Europe and the return of Germany to the League of Nations. Nearly two months of this period have already elapsed.

3. I request that Your Excellency will put these points to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and express to him the hope of His Majesty's Government that the German Government's observations on my despatch No. 541 will be quickly forthcoming. It is most desirable that the points mentioned in that despatch should be elucidated. You should add that the fact that Herr Hitler asked that your conversation with him might be treated as confidential and its substance not communicated to other Governments makes the delay all the more embarrassing to His Majesty's Government, since they cannot reasonably be asked to maintain secrecy for any length of time, particularly if too long an interval elapses before receipt of the positive and definite response for which they are entitled to hope.

It is not necessary for me to emphasise what will be very present to the minds of the German Government viz., the undesirable reaction which delay in the elucidation of the points mentioned is inevitably bound to have on the progress of the European settlement which they and we alike desire, *and is so urgently required.*

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

No. 337

Mr. Eden to Mr. Lloyd Thomas (Paris)

No. 17 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3886/92/62]

Personal

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 25, 1936, 7.30 p.m.*

Following from Sir R. Vansittart.

I have shown your private letter of May 23rd¹ to the Secretary of State.

¹ In this letter Mr. Lloyd Thomas reported a conversation on May 23 with M. Léger, who said that M. Flandin and M. Blum had found it quite impossible to agree on a policy

He asks me to say that both Flandin and Blum are mistaken, as the records show.² M. Blum is particularly wide of the mark.

When he was in Paris not only did he not adumbrate what His Majesty's Government's policy would be on June 16th but it was clearly impossible for him to do so since he had not consulted any of his colleagues. Even now His Majesty's Government have not decided upon their line nor will they until after Whitsun.³

His advice to the French Government would be to consider its own policy on its own account as His Majesty's Government will do on *their* account. The time for the necessary exchange of views will come at a later stage.

to be adopted at the meeting of the League Council on June 15 because they had gathered completely different impressions of Mr. Eden's ideas and policy in their talks with him on May 15. M. Flandin thought that Mr. Eden was prepared to take a realistic view and to avoid if possible Italy's withdrawal from the League; M. Blum thought that Mr. Eden was pledged to a League policy 'à l'outrance'.

² See Nos. 329 and 330.

³ The Whitsun Bank Holiday fell on Monday, June 1.

No. 338

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 971 [J 4748/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 25, 1936*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this evening, when he stated that the French Government were much preoccupied by the meeting of June 16th,¹ and were anxious to know the views of His Majesty's Government as soon as was conveniently possible. In the judgment of the French Government it was not possible further to postpone the taking of decisions in respect of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute beyond the June meeting. It was also their view that while every effort must be made to save the position of the League, realities must be faced, and the French Government were not prepared to go to extreme lengths in order to restore the military situation in Abyssinia. I asked if that meant that the French Government were not prepared to advocate military sanctions to put the Emperor back on his throne. The Ambassador said that that was the meaning. It remained therefore to be decided what steps could be taken to save as far as possible the authority of the League, to liquidate this dispute, and to enable the League, perhaps with the collaboration of Italy, to work out schemes for mutual security in the future. At my request the Ambassador, who read the greater part of the above from a telegram which he had received from the French Government,²

¹ i.e. of the League Council, cf. No. 321, note 1. The meeting in fact took place on June 26; see No. 383, note 2, below.

² For this telegram of May 23 see *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 233.

undertook to leave me that document unofficially for my own use, and a copy is attached herewith.³

2. The French Government, the Ambassador explained, were particularly anxious to know our views so far as that was possible, since if any communication was to be made to Rome it was desirable that this should be done as soon as possible, so that if any assurances were to be forthcoming they should be available when the League met. The Ambassador added that he felt sure that the message which he had read to me, which had come from M. Paul-Boncour, had been approved by M. Blum.

3. I replied that there seemed to be two main courses open to the League. Either we could assert in June that sanctions had not realised the purpose for which they were put on and therefore they would not be continued, while at the same time the League maintained it[s] condemnation of Italy and refused to recognise its conquest. With such a decision the Council could couple a declaration in favour of stocktaking, and possibly some declaration to make clear that those who were assisting each other under para. 3 of Article 16 would not now leave each other in the lurch. That was a possible course. Its weakness was clear, since it would mean that Italy would in fact have proved successful, aggression would have paid, and those who had placed their confidence in the League would be proportionately shaken in their faith. Indeed there were many in this country who were by no means indiscriminating League enthusiasts who thought that if the League could now neither maintain sanctions nor turn Italy out, then its usefulness as an instrument for the maintenance of peace would be very questionable. The second course was to recall that one objective of sanctions was to ensure that aggression did not pay. The triumph of the aggressor, it could be argued, in no way condoned the aggression. Moreover, the Italian Government had made no attempt to recognise the obligations incumbent upon it as a member of the League. This had been particularly noticeable in its decree of annexation. In all these circumstances, those who favoured the second course could say that the League's duty was to maintain sanctions until some such time as an arrangement had been come to which would acknowledge, to a certain extent at least, the authority of the League.⁴ The Ambassador said that the difficulty in connexion with the second course was that it was difficult to see where it would lead us. If we maintained sanctions was it really to be thought that on that account Signor Mussolini would tear up the decree of annexation and be willing to place himself in the hands of the League? That was surely hardly conceivable. If the idea was to constrain Italy to such a course, then he had more sympathy with those who said that to do so we should go to all lengths, including military sanctions.

4. I replied that even without putting himself in the hands of the League it should be possible for Signor Mussolini, if he wished to do so, to make some

³ Not printed.

⁴ This and the four preceding sentences dealing with the 'second course' were omitted from the original typescript draft of this despatch, and inserted in the version printed for circulation to the Cabinet.

positive contribution to the solution of the problem which he had created for the League. After all up to the present he had offered nothing at all, and though the Ambassador might speak of Italy's desire to co-operate with the League in the future, for my part I was not enthusiastic about the value of a contribution which could be brought by a country which had already torn up six engagements to which it had put its name. Suppose for instance that Signor Mussolini were to say that while he did not regard Abyssinia as a mandate he was prepared to accept conditions in respect of the open door and to the raising of black troops similar to those accepted by the Powers who had mandates, and was also prepared to make reports to that effect to the League, as did other mandatory Powers, that would be a contribution which might go some way to meet the apprehensions which his actions had aroused.

5. The Ambassador agreed, but stated that while he thought it possible that some declaration of his own intention in respect of the matter I had mentioned might be possible, he doubted whether Signor Mussolini would be willing to submit annual reports. I replied that I did not myself think that the contribution would be of much value unless it did include the acceptance of a régime similar to that accepted by the mandatory Powers. A mere declaration from Signor Mussolini for instance that he would not raise a black army in Abyssinia would not be very convincing in the light of the fate of his previous undertakings. If, however, an annual report was submitted, such as we and the French Government had to submit, and if that report were examined by the League, then the offer might be of some value.

6. The Ambassador said that he appreciated the distinction, and he thought it important that if any attempt was to be made to secure a contribution of this kind from Signor Mussolini then it was desirable to approach him at an early date for this purpose.

7. M. Corbin then emphasised the danger to the European situation of leaving this dispute unliquidated after June. Who could say what would happen in Central Europe later in the summer? The longer we kept Signor Mussolini under duress the greater was the danger of the two dictators drawing nearer together. I replied that I was not sure that this argument was sound. When the League was strong last autumn Herr Hitler had shown no sign of drawing nearer to Signor Mussolini, but I thought it likely that the League's subsequent failure had encouraged Herr Hitler to consider the possibility of closer association with his fellow dictator. The more serious rapprochement would have to come from the north towards the south. If Herr Hitler observed that Signor Mussolini once more obtained his way at Geneva, then might not he be all the more attracted to seek to come to an agreement with him?

8. M. Corbin stated that these matters were very difficult to assess. At the same time he was doubtful whether the German Chancellor, if he wished to come to terms with Signor Mussolini, would be deterred by the fact that the League kept sanctions on a little longer. On the other hand, Signor Mussolini would be definitely encouraged thereby to seek to draw nearer to

Germany. In any event the Ambassador felt confident that if our decision was that an effort should be made to secure some contribution from Signor Mussolini before the Council meeting, his Government would be very willing to co-operate in that endeavour.

9. I told the Ambassador that in my view it was premature to decide on such a course as that. He must realise that opinion in this country felt deeply over this Italo-Abyssinian conflict. Our people were perhaps slow to be roused, but they were usually tenacious, even obstinate, once they had made up their minds upon the merits of a case. Thus it was in this instance. I could see no sign of softening of opinion in this country towards Italy's actions in Abyssinia.

10. The Ambassador agreed and finally stated that he would call upon me again later in the week, when he hoped it would be possible to make further progress with this conversation. He emphasised the importance in his view of our two Governments agreeing in advance on the action which it was proposed to take at Geneva.⁵

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

⁵ M. Corbin's account of this interview is given in *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 244.

No. 339

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 26, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 183 Telegraphic [C 3879/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, May 26, 1936, 4.32 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I hear confidentially that ever since the victory of the Left in France, Chancellor has been gradually moving away from the idea of a conference or any form of general settlement. There is in his opinion only one satisfactory solution, namely an Anglo-German understanding. If this is unattainable there is nothing much to be gained by sitting down at a conference table.

He fears that new French Government will, with Moscow's connivance, endeavour to summon a European conference on disarmament question. Germany will be invited as so often before to sign on the dotted line or be branded as future aggressor.

Rather than attend such a conference he will withdraw his recent peace offer and remain in isolation.

In any case he holds that questions addressed to him were not drawn up to obtain information so much as to pillory Germany, cast doubt on her good faith and reprimand her for her alleged wrong doings.²

¹ No. 340 below. Telegrams 182 and 183 were despatched in reverse order.

² Minutes on this telegram show a continuation of the mood of disillusionment in the Foreign Office which had followed the receipt of No. 328. Mr. Wigram remarked (May 27)

that it was 'disturbing to think that British public opinion has been so misled by all these years of unreality that, lest it should misunderstand, we are now obliged to run after the Germans and expose ourselves to what are almost impertinences'. Mr. Sargent wrote on May 28: 'If Hitler's policy appears obscure I think it is only because we are inclined to lose sight of his sole and ultimate objective. If we flatter ourselves by thinking that his ultimate objective is agreement with Great Britain, no doubt his methods are hard to explain. But as soon as we recognise that the isolation of France is the one and only thing he is working for, all his manoeuvres become quite clear . . . we [are] aiming at a general agreement, including France, and Hitler [is] striving for an Anglo-German agreement to the exclusion of France.' Sir R. Vansittart wrote on June 1: 'Hitler has never meant business in our sense of the word. The sooner the Cabinet realise that the better for this long misguided country. (It has received little chance of comprehension, and for this the first National Government must bear a very heavy responsibility) . . .' Mr. Eden praised Mr. Sargent's minute and summed up the discussion by saying that 'we must continue to aim at the general agreement that Mr. Sargent refers to in his last paragraph. It may be that it is unattainable, but it is we who must prove this, by making every effort to attain it . . . A. E. June 3.'

No. 340

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 26, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 182 Telegraphic [C 3878/4/18]

Confidential

BERLIN, May 26, 1936, 4.42 p.m.

Your despatch No. 611 May 23rd.¹

Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs have been away for some time and will not be back in Berlin till after Whitsuntide. I therefore called on Herr von Ribbentrop this morning and urged upon him strongly considerations set forth in the above mentioned despatch.

What emerges from a long and unsatisfactory interview is that no reply will be given until after formation of the new French Government. Herr von Ribbentrop indulged in his usual recriminations about staff talks and quoted Mr. Lloyd George as condemning them.² He declared that our questions were quite useless and had really been answered by the Chancellor's former offers. He referred, as Chancellor did to me on May 14th,³ to vital question of the League reform and pointed out that so much depended upon the lines on which that reform would be undertaken. He again painted communistic danger in France in darkest possible colours and said both he and the Chancellor were convinced that Monsieur Blum would be entirely run by Moscow whose one object was to stir up trouble and to prevent any negotiations between Western Powers taking place at all. He said that the Chancellor before replying to us would wish to know whether Monsieur Blum really was desirous or capable of entering upon negotiations with Germany. He believed Monsieur Blum would shortly state his views in a public speech.

¹ No. 336.

² For Mr. Lloyd George's views on the Staff talks see 310 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1472-82, and also his letter to *The Times* (*The Times*, April 12, 1936, p. 15). Mr. Lloyd George had a meeting with Herr von Ribbentrop in London on April 3 (see *The Times*, April 4, p. 14).

³ Cf. No. 325.

I pointed out that staff talks had been forced upon us by German action of March 7th and that they were minimum of what we could do to re-establish confidence, gravely shaken by that action. Mr. Lloyd George was not a representative of present day England. If our questions were useless they would be all the easier to answer. It was surely natural in considering so vast a peace plan as the Chancellor's to wish to clear up certain essential points? Question of the League reform would be simplified if German views thereon were made known. As for Monsieur Blum I felt sure he would evolve more towards the Centre and anyhow away from extreme Communist influence. How could he possibly state his final views on German peace plan until he knew the Chancellor's replies to our very important questions?

I urged Herr von Ribbentrop to inform the Chancellor fully of our conversation and to impress upon him how anxious His Majesty's Government were to receive his reply as soon as possible in order that negotiations might start soon. I pointed out that two of the four months contemplated by Herr Hitler himself had already passed. I asked for my own information whether Herr von Ribbentrop had any definite idea in his mind as to the date or venue of negotiations. He admitted he had not even thought of these details.

My impression, often reported, is more and more confirmed that Herr Hitler does not desire any negotiations and that he is merely playing for time. Herr von Ribbentrop is flying to England tomorrow or the next day. He and his wife will spend Whitsuntide in Ireland with Lord Londonderry.⁴

⁴ Lord Londonderry had been Secretary of State for Air from 1931 to 1935, and Lord Privy Seal from June–November, 1935. He visited Germany in February 1936 and was Herr von Ribbentrop's guest; see Volume XV, No. 494.

No. 341

Note by Sir R. Vansittart for Mr. Eden

[C 4009/4/18]

Immediate and Confidential

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1936

I had a conversation today with Mr. Mowrer,¹ who is the best known and best of American correspondents in Europe. He is a man of high standing and great intelligence.

He told me that he had just returned from a town in Germany. There was not one of the important American Consuls in Germany who did not take it for granted that Germany was going to make a European war in two years at latest. (Where will our own defence measures be by then!!) He simply refused to believe that His Majesty's Government or any member of His

¹ Mr. Edgar Ansel Mowrer (1892–1977), was a United States newspaper correspondent representing the *Chicago Daily News* successively in Berlin and Paris; he published *Germany Puts the Clock Back* in 1933.

Majesty's Government could be so naïf as to believe that they were going to conjure this prospect by negotiations with Germany. He assumed that we were not really blind to reality, though he was aware that there is still a section here, which perseveres in throwing dust in its own eyes. I should add that Mr. Mowrer was for long resident in Germany.

Mr. Mowrer is so able and well-informed that I think his complete candour is worth reporting by me to you, and by you to your colleagues.

I am therefore sending this across to you at the Cabinet—the last before Whitsun. It might be well if some of them had this in their minds during the holidays.²

² At the Cabinet meeting on May 27 Mr. Eden reported that the despatch discussed at the meeting on May 20 (No. 336, note 4) had been sent to Berlin; no reply had been received. He added that a well-known American journalist had just returned from Germany and reported that everywhere the American Consuls took a gloomy view of the prospects of peace.

No. 342

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 28)

No. 128 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3904/4/18]

BERLIN, May 27, 1936

My telegram No. 182¹ of yesterday.

Herr von Ribbentrop complained about the publication of your despatch No. 541,² and declared it had made things much more difficult. A quiet Anglo-German conversation would have given a far better chance of some tangible result.

I pointed out that leakage had rendered publication advisable and I was obliged to make it clear that Baron von Neurath had assured me that he entirely agreed, in the circumstances, that publication should take place simultaneously in both countries. I had even impressed on Baron von Neurath how anxious we were not to do anything in the least discourteous to the Chancellor, and he had assured me that he would explain matters to Herr Hitler, who would quite understand. (The fact is that when the Chancellor heard from Baron von Neurath that publication was to take place he probably exploded and the latter did not dare admit that he had agreed thereto). I pointed out that, however regrettable publicity might be, Germany had so often indulged in it that she could not well complain.

Herr von Ribbentrop then asked where I thought the leakage had occurred and I replied that I had reason to believe that the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs had itself leaked on various points to foreign Press correspondents.

As a matter of fact I learn from our 'Daily Mail' correspondent that the Press department of the Ministry admitted to him at the time that our

¹ No. 340.

² No. 307.

questionnaire did not mention the fortification of the Rhineland, the integrity of Austria or the guarantee for Holland, and that it ran to so many pages and so many words.³

³ In a minute of May 28 Sir R. Vansittart remarked that the 'German anxiety to find reasons for not replying (staff conversations, publicity, French elections) are confirmation of what Sir E. Phipps suspects as to the intention of evading response'.

No. 343

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received May 28)

No. 129 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3905/4/18]

BERLIN, May 27, 1936

My telegrams Nos. 182 and 183¹ of yesterday.

I only wish that I felt as certain as I pretended to be to Herr von Ribbentrop yesterday that M. Léon Blum will not be run by Moscow and that the French Socialist dog will not be wagged by the Communist tail. If this does in fact occur and if Anglo-Italian relations do not soon improve events will indeed be playing into the hands of Herr Hitler.² In these circumstances it will hardly be surprising if he declines to commit himself and decides to profit by the certain difficulties and possible mistakes of his opponents.

¹ Nos. 339 and 340.

² Mr. R. F. Wigram minuted on May 28: 'Sir E. Phipps is evidently as much disturbed about the situation as we are here. I find it difficult to regard the negotiations with Germany as a serious proposition so long as the present state of our relations with Italy continues.' Sir R. Vansittart wrote on May 28 that Sir E. Phipps's comment on Italy confirmed his own views on sanctions. Mr. Eden wrote: 'All this may be true, but it is not we who have broken the Covenant, & the British public is not prepared to sit round the table on friendly terms with the aggressor for many a long day—nor can I blame them. A. E. May 31.' Lord Stanhope wrote that he was in favour of lifting sanctions for many reasons (June 8). Lord Cranborne remarked: 'I cannot see that we are likely to discourage aggressive dictator (b) by caving in entirely to aggressive dictator (a). If Italy wants sanctions lifted, she should make some advance to the League . . . C. 9/6.'

No. 344

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Mr. Eden (Received May 28)

No. 285 [C 3986/4/18]

Secret

BRUSSELS, May 27, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a despatch from Major Paris, Military Attaché to His Majesty's Embassy, recording a conversation with the Chief of the Belgian General Staff on the question of Belgian coast defences.

2. The French offer to take over the artillery defence of the coast is interesting coming as it does after France's expressed desire to look after herself and leave the support of Belgium to Great Britain. It may signify that the French are anxious that immediate steps should be taken for the protection of the Belgian coast. I agree entirely with Major Paris' approval of the frank attitude adopted by General Van den Bergen, which is not only typical I think of the present Belgian Government, but also reflects the excellent position which Major Paris has been enabled by his tact and discretion to acquire with the Belgian authorities.

I have, etc.,
ESMOND OVEY

ENCLOSURE IN No. 344

Major D. K. Paris to Sir E. Ovey

Secret

BRUSSELS, May 27, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to report that General Van den Bergen, the Chief of the General Staff, informed me on the 25th May, 1936, that the French General Staff had raised the question of the defence of the Belgian coast.

The French authorities had offered to assume this responsibility in so far as the provision of Coast Defence Artillery.

General Van den Bergen saw the King, and, with his approval, went to Paris and informed the Staff there that in the view of the Belgian Military Authorities the question of the defence of the Belgian coast was one for joint discussion between England, France and Belgium. He gave me as his personal view, that it was a matter which concerned the British Admiralty more than anyone else.

Apart from the technical questions raised, General Van den Bergen's action in sending for me offers one more proof of the meticulously loyal and open attitude adopted by the Belgian General Staff in everything connected with the Inter-Staff conversations.¹

I have, etc.,
D. K. PARIS
Major,
Military Attaché

¹ A minute by Mr. Eden read: 'The Belgians are behaving well, as usual. A. E. June 13.'

Minute by Mr. G. H. Thompson

[R 3335/226/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 28, 1936*

In his minute within¹ the Secretary of State, after referring to the confidence of the Admiralty in their ability to deal with the Italians in the event of any emergency in the Mediterranean, recalls that the determination of a policy at this time is a matter of the greatest difficulty and importance. It is because I realise so clearly the complexity of the present situation that I venture to submit the following observations.

If a crisis involving hostilities between Italy and the United Kingdom should unfortunately occur in the Mediterranean, the ability of the Navy to cope with the Italian Navy and to exert their traditional pressure will not by any means solve the extremely dangerous military and air problem with which we would immediately be confronted on the outbreak of war. The responsibilities devolving upon the Army and the Air Force would be immense; and I sometimes feel that, in our doubtless well-founded satisfaction over the naval position, there is a danger, in considering the policy which we are to follow towards Italy in the present atmosphere of tension, of losing sight to some extent of the purely military aspects of the matter. The days when the safety of this country and its interests abroad was secure behind the Navy have long since disappeared.

Although we have powerfully re-inforced our military and air forces in Egypt, the fact remains that there are in Eritrea and Abyssinia at least 400,000 well-equipped Italian troops, with another 60,000 in Libya. In the air, taking the Mediterranean and North-East Africa as a whole, we are probably outnumbered by not less than 4 to 1 by an air force which is generally admitted by the unprejudiced observer to be efficient and consequently not to be underestimated. This air force would enjoy the advantage of being able to act in areas where geographical and other conditions are favourable to its effective use, and where large civil populations, easily panic-stricken, will be open to attack. Even leaving the air out of consideration, however, there is every reason to apprehend that if we came to blows with Italy, we would have to cope not only with a grave external threat to the security of Egypt and the Sudan and our Imperial communications, but also and at the same time with serious internal unrest in Egypt (where incidentally there are some 60,000 Italians), and very likely in neighbouring territories as well. At this very moment it has been necessary to weaken our military forces in Egypt in order to send troops to Palestine to deal with the rioters. I do not wish to go into detail in this minute, but I do not think that the situation with which we are confronted in a military and air sense in the Near East at the present moment is one which we can regard with any sense of safety or equanimity. It is patently clear that, in the light of our shortage of men, munitions and supplies

¹ See No. 276, note 6.

we are not in a position to cope at one and the same time with external and internal threats to Egypt, the Sudan, Palestine, and possibly trouble in Irak and Saudi Arabia.

This seems to be a fact which, having regard to the weakness of our possible League allies, should be considered in framing our policy vis-à-vis Italy.

I should add that this view is certainly held in certain War Office circles. During the last week I have discussed the position with two senior officers of that Department, one of whom—destined shortly for an important new appointment—personally investigated the position in Egypt two or three months ago. I am prepared, if required, to give the names in confidence.²

² Sir R. Vansittart commented: 'I think Mr. Thompson is quite right. The military & air factors wd. prove of capital importance, if we ever came to blows; and for that reason I still think that we need longer than anyone else to re-equip ourselves, precisely because we are a democracy. R. V. May 29.'

No. 346

Record by Sir R. Vansittart of a conversation with M. Corbin

[C 4001/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 28, 1936

The French Ambassador, in the course of conversation today, enquired whether there was any further talk of a visit by a British Minister to Berlin.¹

I replied in the negative, pointing out that we had so far heard nothing from the German Government.

The Ambassador, while quite understanding that a visit might be desirable if a reply was received which gave sufficient prospect of an eventual settlement, thought that a bad impression would be created in France if an unaccommodating or evasive reply were received from the German Government and if the visit then took place in such unpromising circumstances.

¹ Cf. No. 336, note 4.

No. 347

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 674 [R 3122/226/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 28, 1936

Sir,

Signor Grandi asked to see me this morning, when we had a conversation which lasted more than an hour. At the outset the Ambassador said that while in Rome for the recent meeting of the Fascist Grand Council he had had

an opportunity for a long conversation with Signor Mussolini. The Ambassador had arrived in Rome about 8 o'clock in the evening, and had been with Signor Mussolini almost continuously until 4 o'clock the following morning. During that time Signor Mussolini had spoken to him at great length on the future of Anglo-Italian relations and of the League, and had empowered Signor Grandi to speak to me in the same sense. The Ambassador had, however, hesitated to do this because he was not sure that the moment was opportune. Even the best messages could be spoilt by being ill-timed.¹ He had therefore waited for more than a week. Now, however, he had decided that he might do as much harm by waiting too long as by speaking too early. He therefore wished to tell me of his interview with the Head of his Government.

2. I might have seen that Signor Mussolini had given a number of interviews to press correspondents—more particularly to the correspondent of the *Daily Mail* of the 6th May, and to the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* yesterday. Signor Grandi explained that he had brought me copies of these interviews together with a reproduction of them which had been made by the Italian Embassy in the form of an aide-mémoire in order, as the Ambassador put it, to give them 'a more official appearance.' Copies of these aide-mémoires are enclosed herewith.²

3. The Ambassador had explained to Signor Mussolini that the British Government could hardly be expected to accept assurances given to newspaper correspondents as being of official character. To this objection Signor Mussolini had replied: 'Very well, then, present these observations in any form which you think fit.'

4. The first subject on which he wished to speak, the Ambassador continued, was the Mediterranean. Signor Mussolini was ready to contribute to a restoration of confidence in that sea. If there were any proposals for pacts or any other similar arrangements he could tell me at once that the Italian Government was ready to consider them. I would appreciate, however, that

¹ Signor Grandi had, however, delivered the substance of this message on May 21, following an invitation to him from Sir R. Vansittart to visit the Foreign Office and discuss certain matters including the question of the withdrawal of extra guards from the British Legation in Addis Ababa (cf. Nos. 312 and 314), the controversy about dum-dum bullets, and references to Italy of 'varying degrees of opprobriousness' in the British press. After discussing these matters Signor Grandi had handed Sir R. Vansittart a copy of the statement made by Signor Mussolini to Mr. Ward Price and published in the *Daily Mail* of May 6, 1936. It included a promise of 'no more colonial ambitions' and 'no hankering after Egypt'. Signor Grandi then referred to his recent visit to Rome, and to a two-hour conversation in which Signor Mussolini had shown himself 'exceedingly anxious to create again, and within whatever time might reasonably be supposed to be practicable, a chapter of collaboration with England and France'. Signor Grandi did, however, 'earnestly hope that Signor Mussolini would not be rebuffed or kept waiting too long'. The Ambassador described the Duce as being 'a man frequently torn between Pure Reason and Practical Reason as he conceived them.' Mr. Eden commented on this on May 27. 'If Signor Grandi has nothing more to say than to discuss the rival merits of "pure reason & practical reason" it will not carry us far. There is a touch of blackmail about this, & we are not in a mood to be blackmailed by Italy. Some constructive contribution by her is also called for, & there is no evidence of it here. If Mussolini thinks he has only to beckon & we will open our arms, he is vastly mistaken.'

² Not printed.

it was not possible, with the best will in the world, for the Italian Government to do this while sanctions continued. Moreover, Signor Mussolini fully appreciated the difficulties which subsisted in creating better relations between our two countries. It would be foolish to attempt to rush matters, and would only do more harm than good. What the Ambassador wished to impress upon me was that Signor Mussolini was sincerely desirous of bringing about improved Anglo-Italian relations. He wished for nothing so much as that bygones should be bygones and a fresh start made. In Europe itself Signor Grandi maintained that his Government's desire was for a close rapprochement between Great Britain, France and Italy 'on a Locarno basis.' By this Signor Grandi maintained we should be consolidating relations between these three countries with a view to a common approach towards Germany. It would be very foolish, in the view of the Italian Government, to attempt to leave Germany out of account. I derived the impression that Signor Grandi was endeavouring to remind me that Italy took much the same view as we in regard to the German problem, and that her collaboration might be useful in endeavouring to persuade the French to more reasonable courses vis-à-vis Germany. Signor Grandi was emphatic that there was no question of a rapprochement between Italy and Germany. A friend of his and of mine had remarked to him recently that he did not know which to admire more, Signor Mussolini's courage in remaining in the League, or his courage in refusing Herr Hitler's advances. These advances, the Ambassador gave me to understand, had been persistent but clumsy.

5. The Ambassador did not appear to think that any useful progress towards this desired improvement in collaboration was likely to be achieved at Geneva in June. Signor Mussolini, I understood, was prepared to be represented at the Council, but he was doubtful whether the moment would then be ripe for any such policies as Signor Grandi had foreshadowed to me. In this connexion the Ambassador drew my particular attention to Signor Mussolini's statement to the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent that he was now to be numbered 'among the satisfied Powers.' This might not seem very important in English eyes, but its significance in Europe was immense. It represented a complete reorientation in Italian policy, and it was inevitable that it should be ill-received in Berlin. The truth was that Italy had enough work to keep her busy in Abyssinia for fifty years. She hoped to find there all the raw materials for which she was seeking. Maybe she was mistaken, but in any event she was determined to try. It would be unwise to speak of the Stresa front at this juncture, and Signor Mussolini did not intend to do so, for it was clearly not practical politics. At the same time, the desire for collaboration with France and Great Britain was sincerely meant.

6. The Ambassador went on to speak of the future of the League. As I would be aware, Signor Mussolini had long felt the need for a reform of this institution. At the same time, he appreciated very clearly that he was not in a position to put any proposals forward in this connexion at present. What, therefore, he proposed to do was to await the views of the British Government, and as soon as we had declared what we considered to be the

right policy for the League's future, then the Italian Government would, he felt sure, give our views their full support.

7. Signor Grandi then spoke of the African situation. He was particularly anxious to emphasise that Italy had no intention whatever of making difficulties for us in Egypt, in Palestine, in the Sudan or anywhere else. Their one desire was for good relations in Africa. He admitted that it might be true that in these last difficult months there had been certain Italian propaganda activities, but, after all, this was only the natural reaction to the threat to close the Suez Canal.

Lord Cecil was perhaps lent a greater authority in Italy than he possessed in this country. This was due to the fact that he had on so many occasions been the British representative on the Council. In consequence, when he had advocated the closing of the Canal to Italy,³ this had created an extreme state of nervous tension. Italy had woken up to a state of things she had never truly appreciated before. She found that the Mediterranean was not a sea, but only a lake, of which Britain controlled both exits. At the same time we had come to realise that Italy, geographically placed as she was, could constitute a threat to our Imperial communications. The only way to liquidate this situation was for each of us to show frankly that we had no intention of being a menace to the other. So far as the Italian Government was concerned Signor Grandi wished, therefore, to declare categorically that they had no intention of fostering in any way in any part of the world propaganda against British interests. If I had at any time any information in a contrary sense, the Ambassador begged that I would tell him at once, so that the matter might be taken up. Even in recent weeks the Italian Government had been very careful in its attitude towards interests in Palestine. According to the Ambassador, the only passage in the Italian press which might have been otherwise interpreted was that in which the Italian consul-general in Jerusalem was described as having refused the guard provided for him, as relying solely on the protection of the Italian flag and as being received with smiles in the streets of Jerusalem. I might be surprised to learn that the Italian consul-general had been severely taken to task for his attitude.

8. As regards Libya, in truth the number of troops in Libya had been greatly exaggerated, but if we could secure a *détente* in the Mediterranean, then these questions, such as the number of Italian troops in Libya, would have no significance.

9. The Ambassador then spoke of the Abyssinian problem itself. He assured me that Signor Mussolini had no intention of raising a vast black

³ Possibly a reference to the decision by the League of Nations Union executive, as announced by Lord Lytton on April 24 (see *The Times*, April 25, 1936, p. 14) that His Majesty's Government be asked to move at the League Council meeting on May 11 that communications between Italy and her African troops be severed, and to announce their willingness to close the Suez Canal. Plans for a deputation to the Prime Minister on these lines were altered by the collapse of Abyssinian resistance at the beginning of May, and the deputation of May 4, led by Professor Gilbert Murray and Lord Cecil, contented itself with urging strong collective measures to prevent Italy enjoying the spoils of victory; see the *Annual Register* for 1936, pp. 38-9, and *The Times*, May 5, p. 16.

army. On the contrary, what Italy desired was a disarmed Abyssinia. To secure this she intended to construct roads, 'many roads and good roads, as we know well how to construct,' the Ambassador explained. These would assist to develop the country, and order would be preserved by means of aeroplanes. 'In this respect we shall copy your methods in Aden and elsewhere.' The Ambassador explained that Signor Mussolini was against the enlisting of a large number of black troops. Not because they could not be made efficient; on the contrary, the Eritrean troops had acquitted themselves very well, but because Signor Mussolini was convinced that to train native troops for ultimate use in Europe was a thoroughly bad practice, and only served to weaken the prestige of a European Power. In this connexion the Ambassador instanced the example of France. What Signor Mussolini desired in Africa was '*la paix africaine*.' He would be glad to contribute all he could to bring this about.

10. The Ambassador then spoke of Austria. Many people in this country seemed to think that Italy wished to create in Austria something in the nature of a Protectorate. This was far from being the case. On the other hand, Italy did not want Austria to become Nazi. There was no question of an Italian monopoly of Austria. On the contrary, her policy there was based on the proposals embodied in the Stresa Agreement and on the Rome Protocol. It was equally untrue to suggest, the Ambassador maintained, that Italy had any thoughts of aggrandisement in the Mediterranean, or any hostile intentions towards any other Mediterranean Power. Her relations with Yugoslavia were in a special category. But Signor Mussolini had hoped that the agreement he had negotiated with M. Laval in January last year⁴ would have been a preliminary to a better understanding with Yugoslavia. Unhappily, these hopes had been falsified by the intervention of the Abyssinian affair. But now Italy hoped that these difficulties, together with others, could be regulated as soon as sanctions were raised.

11. In reply I thanked the Ambassador for his message and told him that I was glad that Signor Mussolini had asked him to convey the message which he had just given to me. At the same time I must once again make plain the attitude of His Majesty's Government in regard to this unhappy Italo-Abyssinian dispute. We had never been actuated at any time in this dispute by anti-Italian motives. This I had explained to the Ambassador more than once, though I appreciated that Italian opinion apparently found it difficult to understand. We had acted as we had done because we considered that we were bound to do so by our signature of the Covenant of the League, which Covenant the League had pronounced that Italy had violated. There was neither in the Government attitude nor in my own any vindictiveness towards Italy. We had done what we had felt it our duty to do. We would not pretend that the results had been what we had hoped for. Nevertheless, we did not regret it.

12. The Ambassador replied that he fully understood the position. He regretted that circumstances so often placed this country in general and myself

⁴ See Volume XIV, No. 90, note 3.

in particular in an unfavourable light in Rome. It was unfortunate, he thought, for instance, that I should have had, as President of the Council, to call the Abyssinian representative to the table in spite of Baron Aloisi's protest at the last session of the Council.⁵ The Ambassador fully understood that I could do nothing else, but the impression in Italy would, of course, be different. I replied that I spoke as President of the Council, not for myself, but for all the members of the Council, and that two or three members at once endorsed what I said. I was a little sorry myself that all my colleagues had not expressed their opinion, as I had understood from previous conversations that they were prepared to do. The Ambassador commented somewhat bitterly on M. Paul-Boncour's silence in this respect. When the whole story of the last few months came to be written, he said, the French Government would be found to have played a somewhat equivocal rôle both in London and in Rome. On this count the Ambassador spoke somewhat sharply, but added that none the less, of course it was imperative for the future of Europe that we should work with the French.⁶

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

⁵ Cf. No. 321, note 1.

⁶ A copy of the above despatch No. 674 was circulated to the Cabinet at its meeting on May 29th. Mr. Eden said that the French Ambassador had indicated that the new French Government would probably not have made up its mind about sanctions before the middle of June, when the Council of the League was to meet; consequently 'we could not look for much help or guidance in that direction'. After considerable discussion the Cabinet agreed '(a) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should see the Italian Ambassador and sound him as to whether Signor Mussolini would be willing to make a contribution towards a settlement by making a statement to the League on the lines of the statements he had already made to British Press correspondents: (b) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should circulate to the Cabinet a Memorandum as to the probable effects of maintaining sanctions and how long they would have to be continued to produce a result: (c) That the subject should be discussed further after the Parliamentary Recess.'

No. 348

*Mr. Eden to Sir N. Henderson*¹ (*Buenos Aires*)

No. 246 [J 5050/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 2, 1936*

Sir,

The Argentine Ambassador asked to see me today when he left with me a memorandum,² of which translation is attached, setting out the reasons which actuated the Argentine Government in asking for an early meeting of the Assembly of the League.³ The Ambassador emphasised that his Govern-

¹ H.M. Ambassador at Buenos Aires.

² Not printed.

³ This request was made in a letter of June 2, 1936, from M. Ruiz Guinazú to M. Avenol: see *L/N.O.J., S.S. No. 151*, pp. 97-8. After consultation with the President, M. Benes, M. Avenol informed Members on June 5 that the next meeting of the sixteenth session of the Assembly would be held at Geneva on Tuesday, June 30; see *ibid.*, p. 5.

ment had taken this action not at all in a spirit of hostility to the League but because they were anxious to maintain the connexion of South America with the League and to combat certain tendencies in that part of the world in the direction of withdrawal from collaboration with Geneva. The Ambassador further emphasised that the Argentine Government did not propose to ask for a discussion about the reform of the League at this session of the Assembly. On the contrary they agreed with the view that I had personally expressed to the Ambassador on a previous occasion that it would be wiser if no discussion on this subject took place before the September Assembly, by which date it was hoped that the nations would have had the necessary time to consider this difficult problem.

2. The Ambassador then asked me what was my view about the convocation of the Assembly. I replied by recalling to His Excellency the procedure which would have to be followed in the matter. When the Assembly last adjourned, it was arranged that if there was a demand for it to meet again, then the President of the Assembly, who was Dr. Benes, was to be informed of that demand and was to consult with the Secretary-General of the League and the President of the Council in the matter. In these circumstances I was expecting to hear very shortly from Dr. Benes and Monsieur Avenol. In the meanwhile I would only say that so far as I could see there was no objection to the Assembly being called together and no difficulty in the matter. On the contrary if, as I understood, certain States thought that the Assembly ought to be summoned, then in my view it would be a mistake if it were not summoned. I was not in a position to say anything more to the Ambassador today, but when I had heard from Geneva we could have a further conversation on the subject.

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 349

Record by Mr. Craigie¹ of a conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop

[C 4192/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 3, 1936

As I did not feel satisfied with the attitude taken up by Herr von Ribbentrop at his recent interview² with the First Lord of the Admiralty on the question of Germany's 8-inch gun cruisers,³ I called at his hotel this afternoon and had a long discussion on the subject. Herr von Ribbentrop also touched

¹ Mr. R. L. Craigie was an Assistant Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and head of the American Department; he was the official Foreign Office representative in the naval negotiations with Germany.

² This interview took place on the morning of May 29.

³ In a note to the British Government of May 4, 1936, the German Government stated that it accepted the British proposal, first made on February 26, for the conclusion of a

on a number of political subjects. It was agreed between us at the start that what we had to say should be regarded as unofficial, since the official communications in regard to the 8-inch gun cruisers had already been made through the Secretary of State⁴ and the First Lord.

Herr von Ribbentrop stated that the point in this whole affair which had made the most unfortunate impression on himself had been the First Lord's statement that, if Germany failed to carry out the assurance about the three cruisers, his whole attitude towards the future of Anglo-German relations might be affected. Herr von Ribbentrop maintained that this question of two additional 8-inch gun cruisers was after all a secondary matter; that the assurances had only been given in the course of preliminary discussions and were therefore subject to modification; and that he failed to understand how the First Lord could say that Germany's decision on this subsidiary question could affect his attitude in regard to the other infinitely more important questions involved in Anglo-German relations. (Although Herr von Ribbentrop did not say so, the underlying implication was that British friendship could not be worth very much if it could be influenced by such trifles). He then said that it was not possible to consider this question independently of the general question of Anglo-German relations, and proceeded to justify Germany's incursion into the Rhineland. Germany was [?now] faced by a combination of countries bound together by military alliances which were termed 'defensive' but which obviously had also an offensive character. What, for instance, could be the purpose of the recent Russo-Czechoslovak military agreement⁵ if it were not to permit Soviet Russia to use Czechoslovakia as a base of attack against Germany? Furthermore, a regular stream of staff officers were passing to and fro between Russia and France across Germany, and it was obvious to everyone that military arrangements of the most far-reaching type were being elaborated between the two countries. In such circumstances, it had been essential for Germany to act quickly, since the German Government were convinced that no amount of negotiation could ever have induced France to agree to the demilitarisation [?remilitarisation] of the Rhineland. To have tried to deal with the matter by negotiation would in the long run have led to war, whereas Germany's prompt and resolute action in righting an injustice had avoided war. This action had been taken in face of the growing intention to encircle Germany, but it was clear that the situation still remained very menacing for Germany, and we should surely take that into account when considering the German decision to build cruisers which she had formerly said she might be prepared to do without.

In reply, I pointed out that the whole trouble had really been caused by supplementary protocol to the Anglo-German naval agreement of June 18, 1935, on the basis of the London naval treaty of March 25, 1936: cf. Volume XIII, Nos. 679 and 718. The German Government intended, however, to lay down two further 'A' class cruisers that year, but in return to renounce the construction of the 'B' class cruiser contemplated for 1936. See *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 309, 336, and 337.

⁴ Mr. Eden replied to the German note of May 4 in a memorandum of May 29, communicated to Prince Bismarck on the afternoon of that day: see *D.G.F.P.*, *ibid.*, No. 355.

⁵ Of May 16, 1935; see *B.F.S.P.*, vol. 139, pp. 943-6.

Germany's act of force in the Rhineland; that Germany must surely see that, whatever the merits or demerits of her case, such an act of force must necessarily produce serious reactions throughout the rest of the world and cause other countries to prepare against the possibility of similar acts of force elsewhere; that the best hope for the future was somehow to revive confidence in regard to the methods which Germany intended to pursue in future; but that to go back on a definite and formal assurance, as in the case of the two cruisers, was the worst possible way of restoring such confidence. It was this aspect of the question which had made such a bad impression on the First Lord, and indeed on all of us.

Herr von Ribbentrop's reply was that 80% of Englishmen approved Germany's action in the Rhineland—he had been most struck by the unanimity of opinion on this point amongst the many with whom he had discussed this question in all ranks of society. He could not therefore agree that there could be any need, so far as this country was concerned, of having to restore confidence in Germany's intentions. When I remarked that I was one of those Englishmen whose confidence needed some restoring and asked whether he could affirm that Germany would in future rigorously avoid the use of force in pursuing her objectives, Herr von Ribbentrop became evasive and gave me no satisfactory reply.

The conversation then turned on the Franco-Soviet Pact.⁶ Herr von Ribbentrop feared that this single act was destined to form the great stumbling-block to all future progress in world appeasement. Moreover, the effects on the social order in France, already serious, were destined to become rapidly worse. He had excellent sources of information and was sure that, owing to the exercise of communist influence, serious developments were to be expected in France. Before long, we might ourselves be at grips with the most insidious of all forms of social propaganda—communism. He believed that a close understanding with Germany was now every bit as essential to us as it was to Germany.

On the subject of the questionnaire, he said Germany was perfectly ready to reply on all points, but that, since we had unfortunately published our questions, Germany must publish the reply. Whatever the terms of that reply, the French press would immediately tear it to pieces and the inception of serious negotiations would be more difficult than ever. Herr von Ribbentrop had clearly been both disappointed and hurt at our decision to pursue the Hitler offer by the method of public questionnaire instead of by the more normal methods of negotiation. I said that what had struck me personally were the flimsy nature of the pretexts put forward for delay in starting negotiations with us—namely, non-existence of a French Government, and Italy's preoccupation with other matters. Herr von Ribbentrop thought there had been some misunderstanding on this point; Germany was quite prepared to negotiate, but feared the repercussions likely to follow the publication of her reply to the questionnaire, and did not wish to choose the wrong moment for making this publication.

⁶ See Volume XIII, No. 156.

I then at length brought the conversation back to the question of the two 8-inch gun ships. I used every argument to show: (a) that the assurance was a formal one given on behalf of the German Government; (b) that the political and psychological effects of repudiation would be altogether out of proportion to any gain on the naval side; and (c) that, if the holiday went, and France, Italy and Russia all built more 8-inch gun cruisers, Germany's relative naval position would be weaker, not stronger. But I could make no perceptible impression. He admitted that the definite assurances of February 26th had not been seen either by Herr Hitler or himself; but he contended that such assurances, given in the course of negotiations, had not the same validity as a treaty obligation and that it should have been made clear in writing that the cruiser holiday was intimately bound up with Germany's construction of 8-inch gun cruisers. (This was in answer to my assertion that the connexion between the two had been made perfectly plain in numerous conversations). He felt that it should not be impossible for us to induce the French to remain at 7 cruisers, if the Germans built 5, and was unable to agree that a breakdown of the cruiser holiday would necessarily follow from Germany's action. He would certainly inform Herr Hitler of the representations which had been made by us, but held out little hope that the Führer would change his mind. On the contrary Herr Hitler would feel some surprise that we should be trying to whittle away Germany's treaty right to a tonnage of 35% of our naval strength in each category.⁷

⁷ In a further note of June 9, communicated by Prince Bismarck to Mr. Craigie on June 11, the German Government agreed to abstain from building the fourth and fifth A-class cruisers: *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 361 and 366.

No. 350

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 699 [J 5101/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 3, 1936*

[Sir,]

I asked the Italian Ambassador to come and see me this afternoon when I stated that we had been considering his communication to me at our last meeting on the Duce's statement of his attitude towards this country.¹ The Cabinet, I told His Excellency, had been glad to learn what he had had to say on this head.² As he knew, the attitude of His Majesty's Government throughout this dispute had been governed by their position as a Member of the League and by their obligations under the Covenant. Even though Italy had found it difficult to understand that position, it was in fact as I had stated it. In this unhappy business our conduct throughout had been governed by loyalty to the League, and would continue to be so governed.

¹ Cf. No. 347.

² *Ibid.*, note 6.

We could therefore clearly have no individual negotiations with the Italian Government on this matter. Indeed neither the Ambassador nor Signor Mussolini in his interview had ever hinted at such a thing and I appreciated that. However, in the circumstances if, as appeared from Signor Mussolini's interviews with newspapers and the Ambassador's conversation with me, the Duce's desire was to make a contribution to the restoration of confidence, I wondered what his attitude would be to repeating to the League certain of the assurances which he had given to newspaper correspondents and to His Majesty's Government. Some of the points, for instance, which His Excellency had mentioned to me concerned a number of nations; no black army, the maintenance and conditions of the open door, the Italian Government's policy towards the population and Signor Mussolini's assurances of good neighbourliness in future in the Mediterranean and in Africa. Why, I wondered, did not the Duce say these things which he had said to newspaper correspondents and to His Majesty's Government to the League itself? Would not that be the proper way to do it, and was not the League the place where they could most usefully be considered?

2. The Ambassador replied that he had been turning matters over in his own mind since our last interview, and he had himself anticipated some such question from me. It was a reaction which he had foreseen from what he knew of British policy and its attitude throughout this dispute. As he understood it His Majesty's Government considered it would be helpful to the situation at Geneva if some such declaration were made by Signor Mussolini. He himself felt somewhat doubtful as to whether Signor Mussolini could in fact take any such action at this moment when he was not collaborating with the League. He did not think that Italy would be represented at the Assembly and the convocation of the Assembly was a further complication. Moreover there was the attitude of public opinion in Italy to be considered. It was his daily task to seek to explain to the Italian Government the influence of public opinion on a democratic Government, but dictatorships were not free from these considerations. Many people in Italy wished to leave the League, but Signor Mussolini had managed to preserve a position half in and half out of the League. Clearly such a declaration as I had suggested would constitute a departure from such a policy. Had I any view as to the form in which this communication could be made, for very often the form was of exceptional importance in these matters?

3. I replied that the question of the form would, of course, have to be thought out by the Italian Government, but I should have thought that it might have been possible to make some communication either at Geneva or to the Secretary General. I must, however at once make it clear to the Ambassador that there would be no question, of course, of any kind of bargaining. As I had already explained, our whole attitude to this dispute had been governed by our membership of the League. Moreover, if there were any value in such a declaration by Signor Mussolini, that would largely consist in its spontaneity. The Ambassador replied that he fully agreed that there was no question of a bargain, or even 'the spirit of a bargain', but as

two Members of the League we were perfectly entitled to tell each other what we thought about the present situation. Both he and Signor Mussolini fully appreciated the position of His Majesty's Government, and they had themselves deliberately refrained from even suggesting direct negotiations though this might have been the best method of making progress. The Ambassador, however, was himself a little doubtful of the effect of the suggested declaration.

4. I added that since the Ambassador had mentioned the Assembly, I wished to tell him categorically that there was no truth whatever in the reports which I had seen in some quarters that the Argentine Government had made their proposal that the Assembly should meet³ at the instigation of His Majesty's Government. The Ambassador replied that he was glad to have my assurances although he had never thought otherwise. Opinion at Rome was in such a state of nerves at this time as to make them credulous of almost any rumour. The Ambassador then remarked that Signor Mussolini had telephoned to him last night. This was an unusual procedure on his part for Signor Mussolini very rarely used the telephone. He had, however, done so in order to tell him two things. First, to complain that his account of his interview with me had been so long in reaching Rome. The Ambassador mentioned this to show the significance which Signor Mussolini attached to improving relations with this country. Signor Mussolini's second reason for telephoning was to approve of what the Ambassador had said to me and to encourage him further in what he was doing. He thought that Signor Mussolini's own view was that we should be careful to maintain the improved tone of our relations and to allow time for the *détente* to have effect.

5. In conclusion the Ambassador stated that he would carefully consider the suggestion which I had made, and added that he felt sure that I would be willing to see him at any time should the result of his communication with Rome make this desirable.

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

³ Cf. No. 348.

No. 351

Note by Mr. Craigie

[C 4172/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 5, 1936*

In the course of his conversation with the First Lord of the Admiralty on May 29th¹ (which took place in Mr. Craigie's presence) Herr von Ribbentrop stated categorically that whatever might be the attitude of France, Germany was ready to conclude an agreement with us which would guarantee against

¹ Cf. No. 349, note 2.

attack in any circumstances the frontiers of France, Belgium and Holland. He introduced this statement as an indication of the relative unimportance of the question of the additional two cruisers as compared with this bid for Anglo-German friendship.

No. 352

Record by Mr. Peterson of a conversation between Mr. Eden and the Emperor of Ethiopia

[J 5132/3249/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 5, 1936

The Emperor received the Secretary of State this afternoon.¹

The Crown Prince, Ras Kassa, Dr. Martin and I were present. The Emperor's secretary acted as interpreter from Amharic into French.

The Emperor began by thanking the Secretary of State for the courtesies and facilities afforded him by His Majesty's Government during his voyage to and from Palestine. His Majesty went on to add a most direct and unqualified expression of his deep gratitude for the manner in which His Majesty's Government, and particularly the Secretary of State, had upheld the Abyssinian cause and the principles of the 'sacred pact'. He recognised that His Majesty's Government had done all that lay in their power.

To the Secretary of State's enquiry His Majesty replied that he proposed to go to Geneva in person. He was much relieved to hear that the Council meeting would not be till nearly the end of the month, since His Majesty stated that his medical advisers had insisted on a period of rest. The Secretary of State expressed satisfaction at His Majesty's improved health.

His Majesty proposed to send Dr. Martin and Professor Jèze to the Foreign Office to-day in the hope that the Secretary of State would be able to receive them and afford them some guidance as to future procedure. The Secretary of State having explained that his engagements prevented him from receiving these gentlemen to-day and that he was leaving for his constituency this evening, it was arranged that Dr. Martin and Professor Jèze should see me this afternoon.²

The Secretary of State explained that this same visit to his constituency

¹ Cf. No. 333. The Emperor and his party had travelled to Gibraltar on H.M.S. *Capetown*, arriving on May 29. They embarked on the Orient liner *Orford* on May 31 and arrived at Southampton on June 3. Travelling incognito, the Emperor then went to his house in Prince's Gate, London, where he received Mr. Eden on June 5. The interview lasted 20 minutes.

² This conversation dealt mainly with the attitude which the Emperor should adopt during his stay in England. Mr. Peterson deprecated his participation in demonstrations, and remarked that British public opinion 'did not really understand royalties who placed themselves on a footing with film stars'. In connexion with procedure at Geneva, Mr. Peterson suggested that the Emperor's advisers should consult M. Avenol as to his activity there.

unfortunately prevented him from attending the reception to-morrow. This drew from the Emperor the only observation of an embarrassing nature made by His Majesty during the interview—His Majesty desired to apologise most profusely for having fixed the reception before he had had an audience of the King. But His Majesty had not then known that Geneva was going to be postponed.

The Secretary of State explained that there was no ground at all for thinking that anything in connexion with the reception would be taken amiss. But he added that he felt bound to make it clear that he was unable to make any statement whether or no the King would be able to receive the Emperor. The matter was one on which he could only undertake to communicate at a future date.

Before leaving the Secretary of State invited the Emperor to put the Legation in touch with me on any points of detail in which he could be of service to His Majesty during his stay in London.³

³ At the Emperor's invitation Mr. Eden paid a further visit to him at Prince's Gate on June 23. The Emperor hoped that if sanctions were raised the League of Nations would consider alternative measures of assistance to Ethiopia, particularly financial. Mr. Eden said that in view of the League's previous refusal on this point he could hold out no hopes.

No. 353

Letter from Mr. Eden to Mr. Baldwin

[C 3689/4/18]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 6, 1936*

My dear Prime Minister,

You may remember that when I saw van Zeeland recently in Geneva¹ he suggested that it would be to the interests of our two countries if Staff Conversations could take place between Belgium and ourselves apart from recent Anglo-French-Belgian Conversations in London.² He suggested that such conversations could be held by the Service Attachés quite quietly; and that the kind of subjects for discussion would be air co-operation, landing grounds, types of aircraft, strategic considerations concerning the portions of the front to be held, and the defences of the Belgian coast.

To appreciate this proposal it is necessary to recall briefly what passed at the recent Three-Power Staff Conversations. The military conversations dealt primarily with the arrangements for getting a British expeditionary force into France, but in no way with the part of the line to be held. The naval conversations were really only concerned with movements of ships, and the air conversations with the suitability of various aerodromes for the operation of squadrons.

¹ The conversation in question was recorded in despatch No. 44A of May 14 from the United Kingdom delegate at Geneva to the Foreign Office, C 3689/4/18.

² See No. 262.

There was, further, in the course of these conversations, an important statement made by the senior French Military Officer 'that France was perfectly well able to look after her own frontier and would prefer that any aid that might be given by Great Britain should be sent to Belgium'; further, we learned that the Belgian coast was undefended.

I think that van Zeeland's recent remarks to me are the logical sequence of what passed at the Three-Power Conversations, and particularly of the remarks of the French Military Representative. My understanding is that what passed at the Three-Power Conversations could in large part also equally well have passed had we had conversations with Germany; and van Zeeland himself pointed this out to me. But van Zeeland now evidently wants to go further than this, and discuss with us alone, as quietly as may be, the question of *plans*. This, of course, would rule out corresponding conversations with Germany.³

I told van Zeeland at the time that, while his suggestion would be very carefully considered over here, I felt doubtful if the present was an appropriate moment for its adoption. We were trying hard to start negotiations which would lead to some agreement with Germany, and I feared that any intimation that we were engaging in additional conversations with Belgium would be seized upon by the German Government as a pretext for returning an unfavourable reply. Indeed, we have recently received a hint somewhat to this effect from the German Military Attaché here in connexion with the question of the fortifications of the Rhineland.⁴ I still feel that it would be a blunder on our part to enter upon further conversations whilst our negotiations with Germany are hanging in the balance; we must not give her the excuse which we believe she may be looking for to break off the negotiations.

On the other hand, I am impressed by the remark of the French Military Representative in London, which I have quoted above, and I do think that if we have to go further in conversations—and we may very well have to do so if, as I fear is only too probable, the German negotiations break down—there is a lot to be said for conversations between us and Belgium alone. The French evidently are quite prepared for that, and if we had to have further conversations there are strong arguments for an agreement with Belgium only from the point of view of our public opinion. Thus, the British public is prepared to defend Belgium and understands that it might be asked

³ In his conversation with Mr. Eden (see note 1) M. van Zeeland gave the following instances of the kind of subject which could be usefully discussed. 'The Belgian Air Force was admittedly small but it was not insignificant and it was clear that if it was to play its role to best advantage it should be able to do so in close co-operation with British forces. There was the question of landing grounds, and of the type of aircraft used by the Belgian forces. It might be of advantage if consideration could be given to the possibility of the types being used by the Belgian Air Force being similar to those employed by us. Again there were strategic considerations. As to the part to be played by Belgium he would not conceal from me that for political reasons he did not wish the Belgian Army to operate between two sections of the French army . . . M. van Zeeland also mentioned the question of Belgian coast defence which I told him that I understood had been mentioned at the Staff conversations in London.' Cf. *D.D.B.*, *op. cit.*, No. 83.

⁴ Cf. No. 336, note 4.

to defend her. It could not be said of Belgium as of France that she would use our commitment to prosecute a forward policy in some other part of Europe. We could not in a military agreement with Belgium undertake engagements which would affect the distribution of our forces in other theatres, because it could be argued that we have to defend Belgium anyhow on account of our vital interest. On the other hand, by any military agreement with France it might be said that we might become politically committed—as we became to some extent before the War—by assigning to the French one theatre for defence and by ourselves engaging to defend another theatre. Lastly, the Germans would find it much more difficult to object to a British military agreement with Belgium, and its existence would not necessitate a corresponding agreement with Germany.

If you agree with the foregoing views, I think that it would be useful to arrange for an early preliminary examination of this question so that in the event of the German negotiations finally breaking down or even coming to a complete standstill we should be in a position to take a decision on van Zeeland's suggestion. If you agree with these ideas I would be very grateful if you would speak to Inskip on the subject and perhaps give him a copy of this letter.

Yours ever,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 354

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on Anglo-Egyptian Treaty Negotiations²

[J 5401/2/16]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 8, 1936

My colleagues will have read the telegrams³ from His Majesty's High Commissioner in Cairo describing the reception by Nahas Pasha of the proposals which Sir Miles Lampson was instructed to put forward in pursuance of Cabinet Conclusion 38(36) of the 20th May.⁴ They will have seen that the head of the Egyptian delegation stated that he was quite unable to accept these proposals, and, in view of the serious position revealed by the

¹ This memorandum was drafted in the Foreign Office and substantially revised by Sir R. Vansittart and Mr. Beckett. It was circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 156(36).

² Cf. No. 274.

³ Cairo telegrams Nos. 472 and 473 of May 26 to the Foreign Office (J 4750/2/16), gave an account of a three-hour meeting on that morning between Nahas Pasha and Sir M. Lampson with their supporting colleagues. The conversations had been adjourned for some time during May for the Egyptian elections; Nahas Pasha had agreed on May 10 to form a government. The situation had been further altered by the death of King Fuad on April 28 and the accession of his son Farouk under the control of a regency.

⁴ The instructions based on these Cabinet Conclusions, filed at J 4604/2/16, were forwarded to Cairo in telegrams 268 and 269 of May 21 (J 4619/2/16). The unpalatable demands from the Egyptian point of view were those set out in paragraphs 5 and 7 of the present memorandum.

deadlock thus reached in Cairo, His Majesty's High Commissioner was instructed to proceed to London for purposes of consultation.⁵ This paper is designed to set out the issues as they stand in present circumstances.

General

2. The first general question to be considered is that the world situation has changed definitely since the instructions for treaty conversations were given to Sir Miles Lampson last February. The present position of Italy in the Eastern Mediterranean as a consequence of her conquest of Abyssinia, the disturbance in Palestine, the possibility of unfavourable reactions in the Near East, the increasingly aggressive militarism of Japan, and the growing likelihood of untoward developments in Europe and elsewhere, make it all the more essential to avoid complications in Egypt. If we fail to get a treaty with Egypt, the situation there will deteriorate, and we may before long be faced with a situation requiring repressive measures and large further forces of occupation in Egypt. This aspect has been more fully treated in C.P. 131(36) of the 8th May.⁶

3. The elements in the case for our decision seem to be simple: (a) with our present military resources we obviously cannot afford to have difficulties everywhere; (b) dangers to this country and the Commonwealth from various quarters may be apprehended from (i) Germany, (ii) Italy, (iii) Japan in the event of (i) or (ii) materialising. Either (i) or (ii) may materialise in the near future, though Germany is the more formidable military menace. Moreover, Germany's potential threat is not to the communications but to the heart of the Empire.

4. In the light of the above situation it seems essential not to let an opportunity slip to clear up in so far as we can our position in the Mediterranean as soon as can be contrived, since it is not possible to feel confidence that another move by Germany will not take place in the near future. We may not be able to effect this clearance quickly with Italy, but should seek to do so now with Egypt. Nahas Pasha appears to have made striking progress in goodwill and good sense since 1930; and it is probable that this is largely due to the Egyptian apprehension—formerly non-existent—of the Italian danger on two borders. On the other hand, we must be under no delusion that, were His Majesty's Government to fail to profit by the present favourable opportunity to reach some really friendly agreement with Egypt, our difficulties would inevitably be increased by a tendency, of which there are already marked signs on the part of the Egyptians, to turn their eyes towards Italy. There is no doubt that Signor Mussolini's recent success has considerably impressed at our expense the timorous and receptive Egyptian public. A situation might thus arise when danger (ii) might begin to

⁵ These instructions were sent in telegram No. 288 to Cairo of May 27. In telegram No. 474 of May 26 for Sir L. Oliphant, Sir M. Lampson described the chances of the treaty as infinitesimal if the British attitude toward the Suez Canal were maintained. There is a fairly full account of his visit to London in *The Killearn Diaries 1934-1946* (London, 1972, ed. T. Evans), pp. 71-9.

⁶ Filed at J 4166/2/16.

overtake and co-exist with danger (i), and with such a situation an Egypt whom we had antagonised could make our position definitely untenable.

Present Position of the Discussions

5. Sir M. Lampson has reported that the Egyptians have refused to accept two major treaty stipulations, providing

- (1) A recognition of a British right to military occupation of the Suez Canal Zone in perpetuity.
- (2) Independent action by Great Britain for the protection of the Suez Canal, i.e., enjoyment by Great Britain of the rights allocated under article 9 of the Suez Canal Convention of 1888 to Egypt and not merely those allocated to Turkey.

6. The Egyptian Prime Minister has stated categorically that insistence on either of these two points would involve the breakdown of treaty discussions.

7. Further, there is another outstanding major point, viz., the continued occupation of Alexandria. To this the Egyptians have shown strong opposition except on the basis of a clearly defined and not too extensive time limit.

8. I must now ask my colleagues to consider whether we can agree to such modifications of our desiderata on these three points as would render them acceptable to the Egyptians. In doing so I must invite especial attention to a new and most interesting development—one, indeed, which is, in my opinion, of capital importance in view of the rapidly and disadvantageously altering situation in Europe. Within the last few days several times orally and also in a formal memorandum⁷ handed to Sir M. Lampson on the 1st June for communication to His Majesty's Government, Nahas Pasha has made an important declaration. Referring to the provisions of the 1930 draft treaty relating to the alliance⁸ Nahas Pasha has stated that Great Britain would, under those provisions, be entitled not only to take the 'unlimited measures of military co-operation' provided for in the clauses of the 1930 draft, but also to take these measures 'even after the evacuation of Egyptian territory by British troops. In other words, whether British troops did or did not remain in the country, Britain's co-operation in the defence of the Canal remains intact.' Nahas Pasha has since informed the Acting High Commissioner on

⁷ This memorandum, entitled 'Defence of the Suez Canal', is filed at J 5160/2/16.

⁸ *Note in original*: The reference is apparently to article 8 of the 1930 draft, which article reads as follows:

'Should, notwithstanding the provisions of article 7 above, either of the high contracting parties become engaged in war, the other high contracting party will, subject always to the provisions of article 12 below, immediately come to his aid in the capacity of an ally. The aid of His Majesty the King of Egypt, in the event of war, or imminent menace of war, will consist in furnishing to His Britannic Majesty, on Egyptian territory, in accordance with the Egyptian system of administration and legislation, all the facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of his ports, aerodromes and means of communication. It will accordingly be for the Egyptian Government to take all the administrative and legislative measures necessary to render these facilities and assistance effective.'

4th June that he and his colleagues meant that our troops could come back literally at any time, with no limit whatever, in case of 'apprehended emergency.'⁹ His Excellency added that the new formula of 'apprehended emergency' would hold good equally at any time (i.e., after, no less than before, the evacuation of Egyptian territory by our troops, should this have taken place). He said that what the Egyptians offered was a perpetual treaty of alliance. The time limit, he explained, specified in the 1930 draft referred to revision of the need for military occupation, not to the principle of military alliance, which was to be of unlimited duration. He asserted that they all wished this principle to be adopted as the immutable pivot of Egyptian policy.

9. It will be seen that Nahas Pasha refers to the continuance of the alliance and of the important facilities provided by article 8 (together with the right to send troops in case of an apprehended emergency) not merely after the termination, if it has occurred, of the occupation, but apparently indefinitely. As a matter of textual interpretation of the 1930 draft, Nahas Pasha's statement is, in fact, not accurate, since the 1930 draft in article 9 contemplated a revision of the British occupation of the Canal Zone, and in article 14 the revision of the whole treaty. The importance, however, of his statement is that it may justifiably be taken as expressing a principle to which Egypt is ready to agree. It is consequently of extreme importance; and in view of its repetition, we are justified in asking him to make a suitable addition to the 1930 draft with a view to establishing the principle of a perpetual alliance. If we were able to secure some such addition, this would remove one of the grave objections to our admission of the possibility of our evacuation of the Canal Zone. It would also render far less important the inclusion in the treaty of a recognition by Egypt of a permanent British right to protect the Suez Canal. Indeed, it may be argued that a permanent alliance is such a recognition, since the whole *raison d'être* of the alliance from our point of view is to provide security for British communications.

10. It is for consideration whether in the light of the above, and of the disquieting limitation of our resources during the crucial years immediately ahead, it is wise to risk a breakdown in the discussions when we can apparently secure a treaty giving to us, even if some time after twenty years we were to evacuate the Canal Zone, the right to bring back our forces in unlimited numbers in the event of an apprehended emergency.

British Claim to act independently of Egypt for the Protection of the Suez Canal

11. The object of this requirement is that His Majesty's Government should have the right to take action independently of Egypt, particularly to prevent sabotage of the Canal and generally to ensure its safe navigation, by recourse, if necessary, to British martial law in the Canal Zone. By the same provision it was intended to secure a legal sanction for the declaration of

⁹ *Note in original:* This refers to an agreement reached in recent discussions that His Majesty's Government should have the right to reinforce their forces in Egypt not only in case of war, or menace of war, but also in case of apprehended emergency, that is to say, before a state of acute crisis is reached.

British martial law in the Canal Zone should this be necessary, though no reference was to be made in terms to martial law.

12. As a matter of fact, His Majesty's Government, so long as they had in the Zone the necessary forces, would certainly act independently for the defence of the Canal if the military situation required it, whether or not the treaty provided for it expressly. Moreover, in practice, so long as the alliance is in operation and working well, there is not likely to be a serious difference between His Majesty's Government and the Egyptian Government over measures taken for the protection of the Canal and the question whether His Majesty's Government have acted independently or not. If, however, the Egyptian Government do not challenge steps taken by His Majesty's Government, as being unjustified because taken independently, but, on the contrary, approve them, it would be difficult for any of the other Suez Canal Powers to challenge them on this ground. Consequently, the express provision about independent action is only likely to be of any importance upon the hypothesis that Anglo-Egyptian relations are bad, when it might be useful as a legal cloak for our action for use against a third Power which was disposed to challenge it. In regard to an Egypt with whom our relations were bad, legal considerations resulting from such a treaty provision would not be of practical importance. Even in such an event some legal case could be made out for arguing that His Majesty's Government, even under the 1930 formula (which is what the Egyptians now want), had not given up the right of independent action, and that the words 'with a view to ensuring in co-operation with the Egyptian forces the defence of the Canal' did not mean that His Majesty's Government could only act in co-operation with the Egyptian forces. For these reasons the point, in my opinion, is not one on which we should be justified in sacrificing a treaty under which we should obtain a permanent alliance, and I suggest that Sir M. Lampson should be instructed that, in resuming the negotiations, he need not insist either upon the formula previously put forward, or on dealing with this point as a point of fundamental principle.¹⁰

Alexandria

13. Egypt will not agree to a British right to station troops at or near Alexandria for an unlimited period of years. But Nahas Pasha has admitted the possibility of our troops remaining in Alexandria longer than in Cairo.

¹⁰ *Note in original:* It must be admitted that the 1930 formula is not satisfactory as a cover for British martial law in the Canal Zone (or at any rate unilateral British martial law as opposed to martial law declared jointly with Egypt). On the other hand, it is obvious that declaration of British martial law in the Canal Zone not in co-operation with the Egyptian Government is a step which would only be contemplated when there was an acute difference of opinion between the Egyptian Government and His Majesty's Government. In such circumstances His Majesty's Government would no doubt be maintaining that the Egyptian Government were not fulfilling the provisions of the treaty, and would base their declaration of martial law upon this fact, which they could say entitled the commander of the British forces in Egypt no longer to hold himself bound by the limitations of the treaty and entitled to exercise the powers of an occupying force.

14. Nahas Pasha had already agreed to improvement of road and rail communications westward from the Canal Zone, amounting practically to the construction of a completely new system; and also to our liberty of unlimited reinforcement in the Canal Zone in the event of an apprehended emergency. These offers by His Excellency render the continued occupation of Alexandria by British troops less necessary than hitherto.

15. In a telegram (No. 263) of the 1st April¹¹ the High Commissioner reported that the Commanders-in-chief 'feel that even the provision for communications alone would be worth more than the retention of one battalion at Alexandria for an indefinite period.'

16. It should also be noted that even if the British troops have left Alexandria they can under article 8¹² be sent back there in the event of war or menace of war. Moreover, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is Nahas Pasha's right-hand man and the most powerful influence in the Wafd, told the Acting High Commissioner on the 6th June that the Egyptians were fully prepared to incorporate the 'apprehended emergency' formula in article 8. This would mean giving the right to send British troops to any part of Egypt, including Alexandria, in the event of an 'apprehended emergency.'

CONCLUSIONS

17. In view of the considerations set out above, I recommend that Sir Miles Lampson should be instructed to continue the discussions so far as the military clauses are concerned upon the following basis:

- (1) Egyptian agreement should be secured to the insertion in the treaty of provisions to secure a permanent alliance on the lines indicated by Nahas Pasha and explained in paragraph 8 above.
- (2) His Majesty's Government's requirements in the matter of express stipulations for (a) a recognition of a British right to military occupation of the Canal Zone in perpetuity, (b) independent action by Great Britain for the protection of the Suez Canal, should be abandoned.
- (3) As regards Alexandria, His Majesty's Government should agree to the occupation of the British forces being limited to a fixed period of years.

I fully realise that the second and third recommendations above involve a considerable departure from the previous Cabinet Conclusions on the matter, but I wish to emphasise that (1)—a permanent alliance with the explicit corollary described by Nahas and his colleagues—offers an entirely new possibility which has never been considered before, and in my opinion introduces a fundamental difference into the situation.¹³

¹¹ Not printed.

¹² See note 8.

¹³ This memorandum was considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on June 10, and was referred to a Cabinet Committee on Anglo-Egyptian conversations, which was strengthened for the purpose; the committee met on June 15 and June 16, after which Mr. Eden circulated a memorandum, C.P. 160(36), dealing with the military clauses of the proposed treaty, and another, C.P. 177(36), dealing with the occupation of Alexandria; both were dated June 19. The Cabinet on June 23 considered these two papers and approved their

proposals generally, subject to further consideration of certain details. A third memorandum, C.P. 176(36), also of June 19, dealt with the Sudan, which had provided the breaking point in the 1930 negotiations. This time the issue seemed less problematical; British supremacy appeared to be well assured, and it was thought that the danger that the League of Nations might give supremacy to Egypt, should the question of the operation of the 1899 Condominium be reviewed by the League as provided in a draft article attached to the memorandum, was a slight one. By June 26 a draft treaty had been drawn up in London and it was transmitted to Sir M. Lampson in despatch No. 580 (J 5776/2/16) to Cairo.

No. 355

Record by Mr. Eden of a conversation with Mr. Pirow¹

[C 4318/97/18]²

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 9, 1936

Mr. Pirow came to see me this evening. In the course of a conversation of an hour's duration, during the greater part of which Lord Halifax was also present, we discussed the future of sanctions in connexion with the Italo-Abyssinian dispute and the German problem.

In respect of the former, Mr. Pirow declared that his Government wished to keep sanctions on for the time being in the hope that it would be possible to obtain from Signor Mussolini some contribution toward a settlement of the African problem. The League could say, for instance, we had put on sanctions to save Abyssinia: that part of our objective we had failed to realise and the Emperor was no longer on his throne, but the Abyssinians remained and we had an obligation towards them. We ought to keep on sanctions until that obligation was fulfilled. After some discussion, Mr. Pirow admitted that this policy amounted to asking the League to keep on sanctions in order that Signor Mussolini might be induced to accept something in the nature of the obligations of a mandatory towards Abyssinia. I pointed out to Mr. Pirow that I thought this was hardly a policy which would appeal to the League. Few of the Powers were actively interested in Africa and there would also be active opposition I felt sure to any attempt to recognise what Signor Mussolini was doing in Abyssinia. Mr. Pirow, however, persisted that he thought it better for the authority of the British Commonwealth in Africa to maintain this attitude even if as a consequence sanctions petered out, rather than to agree to raising them at the next meeting of the League.

We then spoke of Germany. Mr. Pirow stated that on the information in possession of the South African Government he was not optimistic of the nature of the reply which we should get from Germany. He thought that Germany might be willing to come to an arrangement in the West, but only

¹ The Hon. O. Pirow was Minister of Defence in the Union of South Africa.

² With the agreement of Mr. M. MacDonald, this was circulated on June 12 to the Cabinet as C.P. 164(36). A note on the filed copy said that Mr. Eden 'does not however want it circulated in our own print series & in particular he does not want it to go to the Dominions or to be shown to any Dominion repres[entative] in London'.

if we would give her a free hand in the East. He explained that by this he meant a free hand in respect of the Baltic States. Mr. Pirow did not seem to feel much sympathy for the fate of these small countries if they were swallowed up by Germany. He argued that if Germany was not given an outlet anywhere then there must eventually be an explosion.

Mr. Pirow said he was going to Stockholm, but that he did not want to go to Berlin if he could avoid it unless it were possible for a British Minister to be there at the same time. If this were possible, then he would be very glad to have an opportunity for having conversations with German Ministers, but he did not feel that as a Minister of the Union he would be justified in discussing in Berlin with the German Government matters of policy which might affect the United Kingdom.

Mr. Pirow explained to us that his anxiety to bring Italy into an African Conference was a desire to obtain something in the nature of a permanent settlement for that continent. For that reason he wished Germany to attend the Conference because he considered that Germany might be met in her colonial demands now, but that this would not be possible a year hence. When questioned as to how Germany was to be met, Mr. Pirow was emphatic that Germany was on no account to be given back Tanganyika or to have any colony on the east coast of Africa: the presence of both Hitler and Mussolini on that coast would be intolerable. On the other hand he thought that Germany might be given the Cameroons and Togoland and that possibly also a small portion of Portuguese territory in Angola could be ceded to her in return for which we might transfer some portion of the Tanganyika mandate to Portugal. An arrangement of this kind Mr. Pirow thought had some chance of being accepted by Germany, but if we did not have our African conference soon and get round a table about this question, then Mr. Pirow was convinced that the German appetite would so have grown that a demand for all the German colonies would be made by Hitler himself and the position would then become impossible.³

³ The Cabinet on June 10 accepted Mr. Eden's view that no further action was necessary at the moment in the negotiations with Germany. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 367 and 384, give details of Mr. Pirow's approaches to the German Foreign Office, which showed no interest in a visit by Lord Halifax and Mr. Pirow. This had been suggested by the South African Minister at Berlin on June 11.

No. 356

Record by Mr. Wigram of a conversation with Mr. Kirkpatrick

[C 4353/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 9, 1936

Mr. Kirkpatrick came in yesterday on leave from the Berlin Embassy.

I asked him what he thought of our recent policy towards Germany; he said that he did not think we could have acted otherwise.

But what in his opinion we ought to realise was that in a year's time it would not be we who would be addressing questions to Germany designed to ascertain whether it was worth negotiating with her, but the Germans who would be considering whether we were worth negotiating with, or whether they would simply dictate their desires to us.

His own view was that the Germans were not going to bother particularly about our questions as in view of our armaments position they did not think it was really worth while making any special effort to agree with us.¹

¹ Sir R. Vansittart addressed the following undated minute to Mr. Eden on the filed copy of this document: 'This is information of the utmost importance from an exceptionally able man at our Embassy in Berlin. I think you should read it to your colleagues, both in the Cabinet & the D.P.R. A dose of it wd do some good to the obstinate ignorance of Geoffrey Dawson [editor of *The Times*]. R. V.' Two notes by Mr. F. R. Hoyer Millar read: 'S of S had this at today's Cabinet. F. R. H. M. 10.6.' 'Sir R. Vansittart took it to the DPR meeting. F. R. H. M. 15.6.'

No. 357

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received June 11)

No. 140 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4198/4/18]

BERLIN, June 10, 1936

I hear that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have completed the German reply to our questionnaire, but that Herr von Ribbentrop, as a result of his visit to England, is inclined to re-write it himself.¹

The reply as it now stands is, I gather, couched in courteous and diplomatic language, and adheres to the traditional lines of German policy, whilst some of the Nazi leaders would like to impart a 'punch' to it. Herr Hitler is at present undecided, and in any case is in no hurry to send the reply.

¹ A minute by Mr. Wigram reads: 'I'm very much afraid that Herr Ribbentrop—when he was here—saw few people who gave him a true picture of the situation. R. F. W. 11/6.'

No. 358

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa)

No. 309 Telegraphic [J 5188/3957/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 11, 1936, 1.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 335.¹

I fully appreciate difficulties with which you and your colleagues are

¹ In this telegram, despatched from Addis Ababa by wireless on June 8, Sir S. Barton gave some particulars of a recent tendency on the part of the Italian authorities to retreat from undertakings with regard to the treatment and status of legations as laid down in an Italian *note verbale* of May 6.

confronted in your relations with the Italian G.O.C. But you will, I know, bear in mind that I feel it essential, in order to ensure the adequate protection of British interests, to avoid any course of action likely to lead immediately to an Italian demand for the withdrawal of the Legations. In these circumstances, and in the light of the fact that the promulgation of the annexation of Abyssinia subsequently to Marshal Badoglio's message² must inevitably influence the attitude of Italian G.H.Q. in Addis Ababa, I feel sure that the diplomatic body will not over-emphasise importance of form as opposed to substance of General Graziani's replies.³

In the latter connexion there is a discrepancy between the resolution of the Diplomatic body quoted in your Telegram in which it is complained that the General omits in correspondence to address the Heads of missions by their titles, and your penultimate paragraph, in which you speak of his 'ignoring their communications.' If you and your colleagues find yourselves boycotted by the Italian authorities in matters of substance and not merely of form representations in Rome will certainly have to be considered.

Please keep me informed (see last para[graph] of my tel[egram] No. 260).⁴

² Cf. No. 312, note 1.

³ The substance of this sentence, in the draft preserved in the Foreign Office archives, is in Mr. Eden's handwriting.

⁴ This Foreign Office telegram to Sir S. Barton of May 20 discussed the limitations of the British Government's legal grounds for objecting to Italian interference with resident foreigners (apart from legation staff) in Addis Ababa.

No. 359

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received June 11, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 368 Telegraphic [J 5292/84/1]

ROME, June 11, 1936, 1.45 p.m.

When I went to see Signor Suvich yesterday evening in order to bid him farewell¹ and to express my regret that our collaboration—since our personal relations have always been excellent—had come to an end discussion turned on your recent interview with Signor Grandi.² I remarked that I had read account of these interviews with great interest and I felt sure that you would be anxious to know the results of your suggestions that Italian Government might give certain spontaneous assurances to the League. I added that although you had not mentioned the point I personally believed that if it were possible for Italian Government to publish an annual report on their

¹ It was announced on June 9 that Signor Mussolini had divested himself of three Ministries—Foreign Affairs, Colonies, and Corporations—which he had previously held, and that his son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano, had been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. Signor Suvich, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was replaced by Signor Giuseppe Bastianini, Italian Ambassador at Warsaw. Signor Suvich was later appointed Italian Ambassador at Washington.

² See No. 350.

administration in Abyssinia the effect of such assurances would be even greater. Perhaps however Italian Government might find it difficult to address such a report direct to the League.

His Excellency replied that as his tenure of office was at an end he could only speak personally but he did not think any of the suggestions made were impracticable. They were at any rate worthy of serious consideration. He seemed inclined to believe that Italian Government might be able to address letter containing such declarations either to the President of the Assembly or to the Secretary-General. He himself believed sanctions would in any case be raised but perhaps such assurances would make ultimate recognition easier. He did not expect immediate recognition but if such assurances were offered spontaneously he trusted that such action would pave the way to something better than a permanent refusal to recognise, compare the case of Manchukuo.

I answered that I could not of course give him any guarantees, that I had been talking quite personally but that I felt that if such declarations were in fact made the situation would be greatly improved.³ I added that I happened to know that you would attach considerable value to an annual report such as I had indicated being addressed to the League.

³ In accordance with the Conclusions of the Cabinet meeting on May 29 (cf. No. 347, note 6), Mr. Eden circulated to the Cabinet at its meeting on June 10 a memorandum (C.P. 154(36)) prepared by the Foreign Office on the probable effect of maintaining sanctions; it concluded that in purely economic terms the result would be a substantial further deterioration in the Italian position by mid-September 1936. Mr. Eden said that he was not optimistic as to Signor Mussolini's willingness to make a statement of intentions to the League of Nations. He asked the Cabinet not to make a decision that day as to the raising of sanctions, and mentioned that there was no immediate hurry as the Council meeting had been postponed until June 26. 'He proposed to circulate a memorandum [C.P. 159(36): No. 360 below]. He himself was rather veering towards the view that if sanctions were to be removed there was something to be said for our taking the initiative.' The Cabinet agreed '(a) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be authorised to suggest to the Italian Ambassador that failing a statement to the League of Nations, it would be helpful if Signor Mussolini would make a solemn statement on some appropriate occasion addressed to the nations of the world on the lines of the statements he had already made to certain newspapers. (b) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be authorised to inform the French Ambassador that the proposed meeting of British and French Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers did not commend itself to His Majesty's Government for the reasons given above, and that he would prefer to meet his French colleagues at Geneva a few days before the meeting of the Assembly. (c) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should circulate to the Cabinet, if possible not later than Friday, June 12th, 1936, a memorandum containing his proposals as to the continuance or otherwise of sanctions on Italy.'

*Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on the maintenance of sanctions in the
Italo-Ethiopian dispute*

[J 5345/216/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 11, 1936

In deciding whether sanctions ought to be maintained or removed by the League at its next meeting, His Majesty's Government will have before them as a matter of general policy a choice between the following courses:

1. *To maintain existing Sanctions, or even to extend them by the addition of the
Oil Embargo*

In the first place, are we sure—now that an independent Abyssinia has disappeared—that the sanctions front can be maintained and that it will not simply crumble, one country after another either openly or covertly abandoning sanctions? There are already symptoms of this. Will not such a result be the very one which Italy desires, since she will be able to negotiate with each in turn the economic and financial arrangements necessary in order to get trade going again, instead of having to deal with all the sanctionist Powers in a united bloc? Further, how long is it expected that sanctions will have to be maintained before their effect can become decisive? This is a question on which only the most general and uncertain estimates can be made. A separate report on the subject has been circulated (C.P. 154).² If sanctions are not taken off now, what justification shall we find for raising them at a later stage? Even if it is held that a decisive effect can be achieved after a still protracted period, it must be recognised that at the outset the continuance of sanctions will not exercise, save as a slowly debilitating irritant, any great political influence on Italian policy. Mussolini will be tempted to play for time, as he has so successfully done hitherto, and the sanctionist Powers would almost certainly meet eventually with a further failure. In the contrary event of the continuance of sanctions producing at an early date a decisive effect on Italy's financial and economic situation, the likelihood must be faced that Mussolini would go to war with this country. On this point His Majesty's Ambassador at Rome has warned us. And even without war, the prolongation of sanctions would in that case mean that we shall have for a further indefinite period to continue to bottle up our forces in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Egypt.

As for the arguments in favour of continuance of sanctions, these are fairly clear. The first derives from the view that it is necessary to show the world that aggression does not succeed, and Italy that she cannot indefinitely flout the collective strength of the League. It is said that sanctions will secure the recognition by Italy of these facts, and therefore the concession of better terms by Italy to the League. This view receives strong reinforcement from the contention that if Italian aggression succeeds on this occasion, Italian

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 159(36).

² See No. 359, note 3.

intrigue and blackmail and even aggression will be exercised against us in our own African spheres of influence and possessions and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, and in Central Europe and the Balkans generally. It is further supported by the claim that, if an Italian aggressor succeeds, other aggressors will be encouraged.

Against this, three objections suggest themselves. First, Abyssinia no longer exists as a political entity and would have to be recreated: and this could only be done with the help of military forces adequate to support the new administration. Secondly, no such solution, which postulates the cancellation of the new Italian Empire, is conceivable without the collapse of the Fascist régime in Italy preceded almost certainly by a last throw by Mussolini in the form of a war against the sanctionist States or some of them. This course could only therefore be embarked upon if we were absolutely certain of the ability and willingness of France to collaborate in repelling an Italian attack in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, and if we were sure that Germany and Japan would not seize the opportunity of our being otherwise engaged to disturb the status quo elsewhere to their own advantage. Thirdly, Sir E. Drummond suggests (in his despatch No. 522 E of the 30th April³) that Italy's financial position when she has to turn her industries back to normal civil work and to reabsorb her army into civil life may be such that she will be unable to undertake any great new enterprise against anyone, particularly if she continues to incur in Abyssinia the trouble and expense that we anticipate.

If, therefore, the League were successfully to maintain sanctions to the bitter end, this would in effect mean for us the pursuit of a policy which would sooner or later provoke Italy into armed retaliation and allow us to fight partly for our own ends what would, in effect, be from one point of view a preventive war under the auspices of the League; though we should do it of course with the support of other Members of the League like Greece and Turkey whose independence (no less than our own Imperial interests) would be at stake.

But we must also ask ourselves what would be the real advantage to us of the collapse of Italy. On the one hand, we might, at any rate temporarily, free ourselves of the threat of a fresh Italian venture in the Mediterranean or North Africa; and we may well have eventual trouble with Italy in Egypt and the Sudan. On the other hand, it could be argued that we should have weakened an important counter-weight to Germany in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Again, the course of continuing sanctions would only be possible, or even desirable from the League point of view, if the French Government is prepared whole-heartedly to collaborate. If both France and the United Kingdom were united in support of such a policy, it would probably be supported to a sufficient extent by the other Members of the League who matter. But it is difficult to think that the indispensable condition of French collaboration could ever be fulfilled. And this holds good, notwithstanding the recent

³ Not printed (R 2548/1/22).

change of Government in France, for French thought, irrespective of internal politics, is dominated by the German danger and by the heavy risk of German action under cover of a League war with Italy in the Mediterranean.

Moreover, if sanctions are maintained, we must face not only the fact that Mussolini will carry out his threat and leave the League, but also the risk that he will come to some understanding with Hitler. On this point we have had serious warnings from His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin. It is easy to say that joint designs on Austria render a German-Italian understanding impossible; but common dissatisfaction has made stranger partners. The systems and appetites of both dictators are similar, and they have now a common interest in extra-European expansion. Moreover, in order that the two dictators may in practice support each other, it is unnecessary for them to come to any express arrangement with regard to the one point which separates them, namely, Austria. Their very co-existence achieves this end, for each of them by his presence immobilises a great part of the collective strength which might be ranged against the other.

The second argument in favour of the continuance of sanctions is that the authority of the League ought to be maintained. It is evident that if sanctions are abandoned, and Italy escapes with her booty in spite of the disapproval and opposition of the League, the prestige and usefulness of the latter for the future will be greatly affected. And it may also be maintained that the Italian decree of annexation has brought Article X to the fore and that sanctions ought to be maintained by reason of that Article to prevent the absorption of one State member by another. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the prestige of the League would be raised if sanctions peter out owing to successive defections or cupidities, and whether the continuance of sanctions could in fact attain the objects of Article X in this case. The question must here arise and be answered whether the League can be more effectively revitalised if sanctions were now admitted to have failed to achieve their object on this occasion and removed by common agreement with a view to reforming the League on some more effective and realistic basis. Were this course attempted, it might—though this must be doubtful—be possible to compel those Powers who have talked most about and contributed least to collective security to face their real responsibilities in a system from which they stand to gain so much.

The third argument in favour of the maintenance of sanctions is the embarrassment which their removal might be expected to cause for His Majesty's Government at home. On first consideration it might be thought that the maintenance of sanctions would be of some considerable assistance to the Government; but on more mature reflection it is not clear that this would necessarily be the case. There is a strong body of opinion in this country which now favours the abandonment of sanctions, and that body of opinion would be strengthened were it possible to accompany their abandonment (a) by a demonstration on our part that we were not abandoning those Mediterranean countries who had promised us armed support during the enforcement of sanctions, and that we were taking effective measures to

restore our authority in the Mediterranean generally; (b) by proposals for the reform of the League; (c) by undertakings from Italy with regard to her future policy in Africa, the Mediterranean and Central and South-Eastern Europe.

2. *To raise Sanctions while maintaining the Condemnation of Italy and Non-recognition of the Italian Annexation of Abyssinia*

The raising of sanctions could be explained by the fact that, having been applied for a certain purpose, namely, the repression of war in violation of the Covenant, they had failed of that purpose. The measures chosen had been those which could be effectively applied by Members of the League alone, and were also such as were not likely to provoke armed retaliation by the Covenant-breaking State. It had been assumed that the course of the military campaign would be such as to give time for the measures adopted to produce their effect on the aggressor. This had been based on a miscalculation. The campaign had been concluded before the full effect of sanctions had been exercised. It was therefore not practical politics to continue them.

In lifting sanctions, the question will arise whether this action would be accompanied by one or more of the following measures:

(a) *Maintenance of the Condemnation of Italy*

It ought not to be impossible to devise a suitable formula which the Council or Assembly might adopt, without expelling Italy from the League.

(b) *Non-recognition of the Italian Conquest of Abyssinia*

This will be more difficult for us to maintain than in the Manchurian case. Both Great Britain and France have colonies adjoining Abyssinia, and will have to maintain relations with the frontier authorities, customs, &c. France has the Jibuti railway, in regard to which agreements with Italy will have to be made. Sooner or later we shall have to attend to the subject of Lake Tsana. The Italian Government may also soon wish to re-accredit its diplomatic representatives in the name of the King of Italy, Emperor of Abyssinia, and to have foreign representatives re-accredited to him.

On the other hand, to recognise at once would be bitterly unpopular at Geneva, and is not expected by Italy. Fortunately on the occasion of the forthcoming Geneva meeting it ought to be possible to take a decision to remove sanctions without the League having straight away to pronounce itself on the question of recognition. This could well and with advantage keep till the Assembly in September, by which time the situation will have clarified and Mussolini will have had time to reveal his intentions and decide his policy as regards the League generally. We must remember incidentally that the experience of Manchukuo has taught us that non-recognition is a wasting asset.

(c) *Expulsion of Italy from the League*

This could be blocked by one vote on the Council, e.g., Ecuador. It may also be supposed that if France will not collaborate in maintaining sanctions,

she will be equally averse to expelling Italy from Geneva, her object in both cases being to 'keep Italy in Europe.' It might be argued that the League would be better able to save itself if it were composed solely of Members who were likely to remain faithful to its principles and observe their engagements. On the other hand, the expulsion of Italy might well be followed by some sort of coalescence between Italy and Germany in Europe. This would complicate the question of Germany rejoining the League, and a League without either Germany or Italy would be near an absurdity. Expulsion would in fact be a *brutum fulmen*. It would achieve little, and what it did achieve would be undesirable.

(d) *Reconsideration of the structure of the League in the light of recent experience*

This is a vast and very delicate question which is now being studied. It will be impossible to have anything ready to put before the Cabinet, and still less before the League, before the meeting at the end of the month. But it may all the same be desirable to make it clear that in our view immediate steps should be taken by Members of the League to study individually how the Covenant can best be applied henceforth in the light of recent experience.

(e) *Undertaking by Italy with regard to her future policy in Africa, the Mediterranean, and Central and South-Eastern Europe*

If Mussolini could be induced to make some declaration on these subjects *to the League*—or, if that is not obtainable, in some public and official manner—it would certainly facilitate the removal of sanctions—although, of course, there could not be any bargain between the League and Italy on the subject. A suggestion in this sense has been conveyed to Mussolini through the Italian Ambassador in London,⁴ but there has been no response so far.

(f) *Demonstration by His Majesty's Government that they are not abandoning those Mediterranean countries who had promised them armed support during the enforcement of sanctions, and that they were taking effective measures to restore their authority in the Mediterranean generally*

These two ideas are developed in a paper which is being circulated separately.⁵

(g) *Consideration of any measures to be taken by the appropriate means at Geneva to secure as far as possible that no country is victimised economically for the action which it has taken under Article XVI*

There remains the question of *procedure*.

Whatever policy we decide on, we can either

- (a) Advocate it singlehanded at Geneva;
- (b) Try beforehand to obtain France's concurrence with the object of joint action at Geneva;
- (c) Try beforehand to reach an arrangement with Italy;
- (d) Leave the initiative to others at Geneva, and accept whatever the

⁴ See No. 350.

⁵ Presumably a reference to No. 361 below.

majority propose, even if this should result in a further adjournment of any decision.

It will, I think, be generally felt that of these courses (a) is the one most in keeping with the dignity and responsibilities of this country. The initiative and virility in the conduct of League affairs has been in our hands; it is better, both for His Majesty's Government and the League, that it should remain there rather than that His Majesty's Government should seem to be acquiescing in some generalised but amorphous movement behind the scenes, or even following in the wake of some South American State or M. Litvinoff—which might otherwise be the case. Whatever decision therefore my colleagues may reach, I propose that His Majesty's Government should make an announcement of their policy without previous consultation either with the French or the Italian or indeed with any foreign Government. I would, moreover, be in favour of making this announcement in the first place in the House of Commons. For this purpose I annex a draft statement⁶ for use in the event of its being decided that His Majesty's Government should recommend the immediate raising of sanctions, this being the course which in existing circumstances I favour. It will be observed that the last three paragraphs of this statement provide for a demonstration by His Majesty's Government as suggested in (f) above to the effect that they are not abandoning those Mediterranean countries who had promised them armed support during the enforcement of sanctions.⁷

⁶ Not printed; for Mr. Eden's speech in the House of Commons based on this draft statement see No. 373, note 2, below; cf. note 7 below.

⁷ This memorandum was discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on June 17. Mr. Eden referred to the meeting of June 10 and said that the Italian Ambassador had seen Sir R. Vansittart on the subject referred to in Conclusion (a) (cf. No. 359, note 3); he understood that the Italian reply had been very satisfactory and that there was reason to believe that Signor Mussolini would give to the League the assurances that he had already given to His Majesty's Government (No. 350). After discussion of the memorandum the general policy proposed by Mr. Eden therein was accepted. Suggestions were made for the amendment of the draft statement for presentation to Parliament drawn up by the Foreign Office as an appendix to the memorandum (not printed). The Cabinet agreed '(a) to approve the general line proposed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in C.P. 159(36), namely that the policy of the Government should be to take the initiative at the League of Nations in proposing the raising of sanctions against Italy, and that the Secretary of State should announce the policy in the first place in the House of Commons without previous consultation either with the French or the Italian or, indeed, any other foreign Government (*see, however, (d) below, as to a prior communication to the representatives of certain Governments*): (b) To approve the broad lines of the draft Statement for the House of Commons contained in the Annex to C.P. 159(36), subject to an amendment of the last two paragraphs in order to avoid any possibility of an inference being drawn that we were undertaking some new and unilateral commitment; the emphasis being laid rather on the fact that the mutual assurances given last autumn by certain countries that were especially exposed to retaliation by Italy for sanctions did not come to an end when sanctions were dropped: (c) To leave the terms in which the Statement was to be revised to the discretion of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: (d) To take note that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs proposed to see the French Ambassador and the Ministers of Greece, Turkey and Yugo-Slavia before his forthcoming speech in Parliament, in order to communicate to them the general line which he proposed to take.'

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on the problems facing His Majesty's Government in the Mediterranean as a result of the Italo-League Dispute

[R 3440/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 11, 1936

Since the advent to power of Herr Hitler, and since the rearmament of Germany began to assume the rate and proportions with which it is now being carried on, His Majesty's Government have been mainly preoccupied by the continental ambitions of that country, the deferred threat implied by these to British interests and British territory, and the means by which this threat can be averted or met. In parallel they have been preoccupied by the aggressive nature of Japanese policy and the specific threats implicit therein to the British position in the eastern hemisphere. To these preoccupations the Italian conquest of Abyssinia has added a new and unexpected problem which may in few words be described as follows.

The safety of British communications passing through the Suez Canal, the relative stability of international relations in the Mediterranean and Red Sea basins, the internal security of British possessions and protectorates in those areas, the paramountcy of Britain in Egypt, and the influence which His Majesty's Government have been able to exercise over foreign States in the Near and Middle East have hitherto been largely assured by the unchallenged and, as it was thought, unchallengeable efficacy and prestige of British sea power in the Mediterranean.

Recent events have, rightly or wrongly, placed in doubt the capacity of Great Britain to maintain her predominant position in the Mediterranean, and, even supposing the capacity to exist, her determination to do so. Ground has, in short, been given in many quarters for the belief that, for one reason or another, we are unable to meet the Italian challenge, and, as a consequence, profound misgivings and hesitations have been manifested in Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Arabia and Palestine. (These apprehensions are, of course, widespread in other and even more important countries which are not germane to the purpose of this paper.) This unsettlement of opinion will in any case manifest itself in Iraq, Persia and even further afield unless something is done to arrest its progress. I do not propose in this paper to elaborate this theme, the grave import of which must indeed be obvious to everyone having any acquaintance with the Middle East and the Moslem world. I would only allude to the question of our oil supplies and to the importance to us of Moslem opinion in India to show that the stress I have laid on this relatively local aspect of the question is not exaggerated.

The points I wish to emphasise are four. The first is this: that, though Italy would certainly prove to be a much less formidable antagonist than Germany or Japan, the area within which we are exposed to her political or military hostility is one in which British interests are not only very important,

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 165(36).

but very vulnerable, and that the danger from Italy might become acute with very little notice and at any moment—particularly after the lapse of time necessary for the consolidation of Italy's present gains.

The second point is that a deterioration of the British position in the Mediterranean and Red Sea basins must be anticipated unless we do something to re-establish our prestige and do it soon and with some emphasis. Merely to hurry on with our rearmament programme or advertise the uses to which our armaments might be put when they are ready is not enough. Nor will talk about the League of Nations or projects for its reform suffice.

The third point concerns the situation which may arise on the withdrawal of sanctions.² It may be found that special measures are necessary in order that our prestige and power in the Mediterranean may be restored, and perhaps also in order that Italy may be deterred from further 'expansion' to our detriment. What these measures might be, and the circumstances in which they might be applied, are the subjects of the present paper.

Fourthly, in submitting the annexed paper to my colleagues, I do not wish to imply that an ultimate friendly agreement with Italy is impossible. On the contrary, I do not propose that we should reject Mussolini's recent offers of goodwill and collaboration; we ought, indeed, to put them to the test in due course, just as we are attempting to put to the test the similar assurances which we are continually receiving from Herr Hitler. Nor do I wish, on the other hand, to exaggerate in any way Italy's potential capacity for mischief. It may well be that her financial and economic troubles will ensure her good behaviour for some time to come; and though her organisational powers have been triumphantly demonstrated in Abyssinia, her combative powers—particularly in the face of any enemy provided with modern equipment—have not yet been really tested. But in spite of all this, the situation is such that it is only prudent that we should consider insuring against possible risks. In the case of Germany we have effected this insurance by our recent agreement of the 19th March with France and Belgium.³ I now suggest that some similar form of insurance may have become advisable in respect of Italy.

It will be seen that the proposals in the accompanying paper fall into two categories: those which have to be taken immediately on the withdrawal of sanctions, and those which will have to wait on events and developments which may be expected to occur when we enter the new phase when sanctions have been withdrawn. Although no immediate decision may be necessary or possible with regard to the second category, it would be desirable, none the less, for the Cabinet to have the views of the Chiefs of Staff forthwith on the strategical aspect of the questions involved.

A. E.

² Cf. No. 360.

³ See No. 144.

*Memorandum**FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 10, 1936*

Among the problems arising out of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia are the following.

- (1) If sanctions are to be removed at the next meeting of the Council, those countries in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean who are at present in a state of disquiet at the prospect of possible Italian aggression in their direction will be still further alarmed when, with the disappearance of sanctions, they automatically are deprived of the guarantee of the other League Members, and more particularly of Great Britain and France, which they enjoy under paragraph 3 of Article 16 of the Covenant.
- (2) Again, if sanctions are removed, there is the question whether, pending thorough discussions of League reform, any steps are possible in the Mediterranean with a view to reinforcing the efficacy and restoring the prestige of the League.
- (3) Lastly, whether sanctions are removed or not, there is the underlying, enduring, and all-important question of what should be done at a subsequent stage to restore the impaired prestige of His Majesty's Government in the Mediterranean, especially the Eastern Mediterranean, and to provide such additional security for Imperial communications through the Mediterranean with Egypt, Palestine and the Far East as Mussolini's victory in Abyssinia renders indispensable on any long view.

2. These three problems stand as they have been stated in inverse order of

* This memorandum was the result of considerable discussion and minuting in the Foreign Office, originating in a note by Mr. Sargent of May 22 and another by Mr. O'Malley dated May 24. Sir R. Vansittart added on May 25 a proposal for 'a general declaration to all our collaborators and to all those who gave assurances, *but without naming any one of them*'. Mr. Eden on May 31 and June 1 approved both papers, and was attracted by Mr. Sargent's proposal for an agreement with Greece and Turkey which would lead to the obtaining of valuable facilities for the British fleet. There are indications of considerable differences of opinion in the Foreign Office over these proposals. There is a brief record (R 4005/294/67) by Mr. Sargent of a meeting on June 2 convoked by Mr. Eden in Sir R. Vansittart's absence at which the two above-mentioned papers and a draft declaration on the lines of Sir R. Vansittart's suggestion were discussed. Mr. Eden gave instructions for a paper to be prepared for the Cabinet embodying the gist of the two papers and the draft declaration, and recommending the conclusion of a defensive agreement with Greece and Turkey. A note by Sir R. Vansittart of June 4 stated his opposition to a pact confined to Turkey and Greece, and his belief in the shortsightedness of the view 'that there can be any Mediterranean security from which France and Italy are excluded'. The Cabinet paper as drafted appears, however, to have gone before the Cabinet without alteration, except for the deletion of a paragraph asserting the desirability of liquidating the 'present quarrel with Italy by means of some general settlement with that country covering both Abyssinia and the Mediterranean', and the addition of the last sentence of paragraph 12(V) below, which is in Sir R. Vansittart's handwriting.

magnitude. But while problem No. (1) will call for immediate treatment as soon as sanctions are removed by the League, the solutions of problems Nos. (2) and (3) must wait upon events and can at this stage only be suggested in broad outline. Actual decisions will depend upon the development of the general situation.

3. It will be useful, however, forthwith to examine one particular proposal which has been put forward more or less as a general panacea, namely, the proposal for a Mediterranean Pact. This proposal is especially popular at the present moment among the lesser Mediterranean Powers, and although it has not taken any concrete shape a good deal more is likely to be heard of it in the immediate future. It is by no means a new conception, for the idea of an agreement between the Mediterranean Powers can be traced back at least as far as 1907, when declarations were exchanged between the United Kingdom, France and Italy affirming the intention of the three Powers individually to maintain the territorial status quo, but not containing any kind of guarantee.⁵ It re-emerges in 1927 and is generally referred to thereafter as a 'Mediterranean Locarno.'⁶ A great variety of pacts came under discussion from time to time in connexion with discussions of disarmament and naval limitation, but these were directed, and directed primarily by the French Government, towards two objects: in general, towards an extension of the European security system, and, in particular, towards a solution of the problems created by Franco-Italian rivalry.

4. We did not encourage the idea because (a) we did not wish to undertake further commitments beyond Locarno and the Covenant; (b) it was difficult to see how the guarantee could be limited to defence against naval attack.

⁵ The first group of agreements for the maintenance of the status quo in Mediterranean regions had in fact been concluded in 1887, and had taken the form of an exchange of letters signed by Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Great Britain. They are printed in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914* (eds. G. P. Gooch and H. W. V. Temperley), vol. viii, Nos. 1, 1(a)-(d), 2(a)-(d), a work which had been published in 1932 but had evidently not been consulted by the Foreign Office in the drafting of this memorandum. Spain was drawn into these agreements by an exchange of notes with Italy on May 4, 1887. The best account is by C. J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean, 1886-1896* (London, 1965). Although not formally abrogated these Mediterranean agreements (usually known in Italy as the de Robilant system) were considered to have lost most of their meaning after 1896, when Italy, anticipating the Anglo-French agreement which was finally achieved in 1904, came to terms with France over North African questions on January 4, 1901: see Enrico Serra, *L'Intesa Mediterranea del 1902* (Milan, 1957). On May 16, 1907, notes were exchanged between Sir E. Grey and the Spanish Ambassador in London, and between M. Pichon, the French foreign minister, and the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, affirming the desire of the three governments to maintain the territorial status quo and their own rights 'in the Mediterranean and in that part of the Atlantic Ocean which washes the shores of Europe and Africa' (Gooch and Temperley, *op. cit.*, vol. vii, Nos. 39-43). Mr. Eden's reference above is presumably to these exchanges in 1907. Italy was linked to them by her agreement with France of 1901. Sir E. Grey decided, however, in November 1907 that it was not desirable to seek an Anglo-Italian agreement analogous to the Anglo-Spanish and Franco-Spanish agreements because it would be 'an unnecessary offence to Germany' (*ibid.*, vol. viii, No. 20).

⁶ Cf. Series IA, Volume II, Chapter IV.

In practice the guarantee would have had to operate in the event of a land war between any of the parties; thus, our guarantee would have been invoked in the case of Yugoslavia invading Greece, or Italy invading Yugoslavia, or Yugoslavia invading Albania. In practice, in none of these cases could the British Government have pledged themselves to go to war; (c) it would have been difficult to exclude Egypt, Russia, and Roumania from participation in the Pact, but their inclusion would in each case have raised the most difficult problems; (d) it was feared that any Mediterranean Pact might well involve provisions for limiting the naval forces of the various signatories in the Mediterranean, thereby limiting the freedom of action of the British Government in increasing or reducing the size of the Mediterranean Fleet according to requirements.

5. The proposal for a Mediterranean agreement cropped up on numerous occasions during the winter of 1935-36 in conversations between Signor Mussolini and Sir Eric Drummond.⁷ The Duce gave little indication of his desires or intentions beyond suggesting at one point that ratios for naval and air forces should be fixed; but if the tensions then existing, the dubious prospects of the Abyssinian campaign, and all the evidence of Italian ambitions and intrigues are taken into consideration, we may fairly conclude that his primary object was not so much the attainment of a permanent and comprehensive settlement as relief from temporary embarrassments arising out of the presence of a reinforced British fleet in the Mediterranean. However that may be, the course of events did not favour the development of whatever plan for a Mediterranean agreement he then entertained.

6. At the present time and in any immediate future Italy's recent acts and declared intentions must be held to preclude her participation at the same table as ourselves in the negotiation of a general agreement under League auspices for the restraint of aggression. On the other hand, even the temporary exclusion—whatever its duration—of Italy from an agreement including all or most of the other Mediterranean Powers would manifestly be regarded as evidence that we intend to apply a policy of encirclement to Italy and would thus tend to perpetuate and envenom existing antagonisms. For that reason it is unlikely that France either could or would ever agree to join such a pact. It must be realised that for the present she is, and will continue to be, less sensitive than ourselves to problems which may arise in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea from the ulterior ambitions of a vigorous and victorious dictator, for her attention is being concentrated more and more closely on Germany, and it is a fair presumption that her present attitude towards any kind of Mediterranean Pact will be conditioned by the extent to which it would subserve the policy commonly referred to as the 'Stresa Front.' This means that France will favour courses calculated to restore harmony between the British and Italian Governments, but will discourage any agreement regarded by Mussolini as designed to diminish his prestige or circumscribe his Mediterranean policies. Nor would it help matters if the Pact contemplated were so constructed as to permit of Italy acceding to it

⁷ See Volume XV, Nos. 160, 161, 181, 188, 189, 203, and 210.

subsequently, for we know by experience that a Great Power usually in such cases declines to co-operate, on the ground that she has been presented with a *fait accompli*, and then proceeds to argue that as the Pact is being operated without her, it must be held to be directed against her. Italy would almost certainly adopt this attitude.

7. A Mediterranean Pact is thus seen on examination to be either impracticable or unsuitable for the immediate objects we have in view. A Pact without Italy is open to manifest objections and dangers; and the time is not yet ripe for a Mediterranean Pact of which Italy would be an original member. But though for our immediate purposes the idea of a Mediterranean Pact must be ruled out, this need not necessarily mean that in different circumstances and at a later date such a pact might not be useful as a stabilising influence or as a means of replacing international relationships in the Mediterranean on a more normal footing. But for this one condition is, and always will be, essential: that is, that Italy must participate with France and Great Britain as a friend, and not as a potential enemy.

8. Failing a general Pact, what other means are open to us for dealing with our three immediate problems enumerated in paragraph 1? The following possibilities are submitted.

9. *Method for dealing with Problem (1)* (i.e., the guarantee to the lesser Mediterranean Powers).

The shortest and simplest method would be for Great Britain alone to make a public declaration, both at Geneva and in Parliament, to the effect that if, during the present transitional period of crisis, the Mediterranean States which collaborated with His Majesty's Government when Article 16 of the Covenant was being applied during the sanctions period were attacked in violation of the Covenant, His Majesty's Government would come to their assistance in the same manner as had been contemplated during the application of sanctions. The draft of a declaration on these lines is given in an Annex. If France would make a similar declaration, so much the better, but it is not essential. It will be seen that the circumstances in which the guarantee would operate are carefully restricted and in such way that His Majesty's Government remain in effect sole judge as to when this is to be applied, and as to when the declaration itself shall be considered to have lapsed. As to the ability and willingness of His Majesty's Government to give effect to such an undertaking, it may be hazarded that in the case of Turkey and Greece such guarantees would coincide with British vital interests and would thus be susceptible of justification to public opinion. In the case of Yugoslavia, however, it must be confessed that it might be a more difficult matter for His Majesty's Government to implement them in the event of a war between Yugoslavia and Italy, especially as the origins of the war might be difficult to disentangle. But in the circumstances it seems necessary to take this risk.

10. *Method for dealing with Problem (2)* (i.e., action by the Mediterranean Powers to restore the authority of the League in the Mediterranean).

Short of expelling Italy from the League, which would create an added

inducement for her to coalesce with Germany, the only policy so far suggested has been a general Mediterranean Pact, the objections to which have been set forth above. On the whole, it seems doubtful whether any immediate and limited action by the Mediterranean Powers would in itself restore the general authority of the League. More far-reaching measures affecting the essential character of the League as a whole will probably be found to be necessary to achieve this purpose.

11. *Methods for dealing with Problem (3)* (i.e., the restoration of British maritime strength in the Mediterranean).

For the purposes of this paper it is taken for granted that it is vital for both political and strategic reasons that we should maintain and secure our position in the Mediterranean, and that it is in the Eastern Mediterranean that our interests are particularly vital, particularly exposed, and at the same time least efficiently defended. If, in addition, we have reason to think that our already weakened position may be eventually challenged by Italy, we are then faced with a situation where three different courses are open to us. We can either try and restore our position by our own unaided efforts, that is to say, by permanently increasing our naval forces and strengthening our naval bases in the Mediterranean; or we can explore the possibilities of coming to terms with Italy; or we can organise a system of defence in collaboration with those other countries which feel themselves threatened by Italian ambitions.

If the first of these courses is held to be insufficient by itself, and if the second is impracticable in present circumstances, then we are led inevitably to consider the possibility of a restricted naval defensive agreement, under League auspices, between Great Britain, Greece and Turkey.

What are the prospects of our being able to bring about such an agreement, and what practical value would be expected to derive from it?

At the present time Turkey and Greece are so uneasy at the prospect of Italian aggression that in return for our protection it is not unreasonable to suppose that we could obtain from them valuable concessions as regards the use of their territorial waters and harbours by the British fleet. The grant of such facilities would strengthen our position in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans; while the commitment which we would assume to protect the integrity of Turkey and Greece is one which British vital interests would impose upon us in any case. Turkey might wish to bring Yugoslavia into this guarantee scheme, but we would have to resist this, as a guarantee of Yugoslavia would constitute a very real and new obligation which both politically and strategically we would find it very difficult to fulfil; besides, Yugoslavia could give us no *quid pro quo*. Such an agreement with Turkey and Greece would not be directed against Italy but against any disturber of the peace in the Eastern Mediterranean, and so long as no other Great Power participated it could not be held to constitute the encirclement of Italy, any more than a unilateral guarantee by us of Belgian integrity, which has been before now under consideration, could be considered to be a threat to, or the encirclement of, Germany. The political advantages of such an agreement, on the other hand, are numerous and important: (a) The agreement would

go far to re-establish locally belief in our determination to protect our lines of communication with the Far East; (b) and consequently to enhance our prestige; (c) it would act as a warning and deterrent to Italy; (d) the agreement would have a stabilising influence in Egypt, Palestine and Iraq; (e) it would strengthen the Balkan Entente, and indirectly give reassurance to Yugoslavia and Roumania; (f) it might be expected to counteract the growing influence of Germany in Greece and Turkey.

It is not suggested that this agreement should be automatically brought into effect on the withdrawal of sanctions. On the contrary, as pointed out in paragraph 2, the need and occasion for negotiating this agreement will depend on events as they may be expected to shape themselves in the period following the removal of sanctions.

Lastly, it may be argued that it is no use for us to increase our strength in the Eastern Mediterranean so long as our position in the Western Mediterranean remains as vulnerable as it is at present, owing to Italy's ability to threaten Malta and command the routes from Gibraltar to the Eastern Mediterranean. The only way to get over this difficulty is to bring France into the scheme, but to bring France into the Anglo-Turco-Greek scheme would at once convert it into a pact for the encirclement of Italy; besides, as already pointed out, France would probably refuse to lend herself to such a policy, and, in addition to this, it is doubtful whether it would be to the advantage of ourselves, the Turks, or the Greeks, that France should be granted naval facilities in Turkish or Greek waters, facilities which France would certainly ask for if they were granted to us. It would seem, as regards the Western Mediterranean, that Great Britain must rely on her own efforts to strengthen her defences. But, if necessary, she might be able to arrange with France a special Anglo-French naval agreement, such as that which existed before the War, whereby France undertook to protect our interests in the Mediterranean in return for our defending French interests in the North Sea and the Channel.

12. The conclusions to be derived from the above analysis may be summarised as follows.

- I. If sanctions are withdrawn by the League, we ought at once, without waiting for the French, to state that we still are ready during the present period of uncertainty to come to the assistance of our recent collaborators in the Mediterranean in the circumstances set forth in the attached draft Declaration.⁸
- II. We ought not in present circumstances to hope to restore the prestige of the League by any special arrangements regarding the Mediterranean.
- III. The Chiefs of Staff should be asked forthwith to report on the strategical questions raised in this paper, and on the validity of the assumptions on which the proposals in this paper are based.

⁸ This was done in a statement by Mr. Eden to the House of Commons on June 18: see No. 373, note 2 below.

- IV. When we see, after sanctions have been withdrawn, how the situation develops, we ought—subject to the views of the Chiefs of Staff—to consider further the question of an Eastern Mediterranean understanding with Turkey and Greece on the lines suggested in this paper.⁹
- V. While a general Mediterranean Pact without Italy would in all circumstances be open to serious objection, the time may come when some sort of Mediterranean Pact, including France and Italy, may prove useful as part of, and in order to facilitate, a general *détente* with Italy. We have not, however, at present reached the stage when such a step need be contemplated.

ANNEX TO NO. 361

DRAFT DECLARATION

On the occasion of the removal of the measures imposed on the 11th October last against Italy in virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom desire to call the attention of the Council to the memorandum which they presented to the Co-ordinating Committee on the 22nd January,¹⁰ regarding the results of the exchanges of views which had taken place between His Majesty's Government and certain other Governments in connexion with the application of Article 16 of the Covenant.

In paragraph 10 of that memorandum it is stated that His Majesty's Government had given reciprocal assurances to the Governments of Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia, to the effect that they intended faithfully to apply all the obligations devolving upon them under the Covenant in consequence of the measures taken in the application of Article 16.

Since the conditions in which these assurances were given will come to an end with the removal of the measures to which I have referred, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom now declare for their part that if Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia should be the victims of an act of unprovoked aggression committed in violation of the Covenant and arising out of the collaboration of the Governments of these three countries with His Majesty's Government during the recent period when Article 16 was being applied, His Majesty's Government will at once assist the country so attacked in the same manner as was contemplated in the exchanges of view between His Majesty's Government and these three Governments last December.

⁹ The Cabinet discussed C.P. 165(36) on June 17 and again on June 23, when it was decided that the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee should consider and report on the proposals for an Eastern Mediterranean understanding with Turkey and Greece. In a report dated July 21 the C.O.S. Sub-Committee reported that an understanding with Greece would have 'very great disadvantages for us'; an agreement with Turkey would be on balance advantageous, but could not be achieved without 'still further exacerbating our relations with Italy'. This memorandum as C.P. 211(36) was laid before, and taken notice of by, the Cabinet on September 2, 1936.

¹⁰ See Volume XV, No. 472, note 5.

It will be appreciated that this declaration is made with the object of removing certain preoccupations which may exist in the present transitional period and is intended to operate only so long as, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, it remains appropriate to the existing circumstances.

No. 362

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received June 13, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 376 Telegraphic [J 5341/1000/1]

ROME, June 12, 1936, 11.15 p.m.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain's speech to 1900 Club¹ and Prime Minister's answers in House of Commons² have made a great impression here and messages from London report that effect in England is profound. There are only two editorial comments so far. *Stampa* approves heartily and says Chancellor arrives at his opinion from orthodox League angle leaving out any reference to British imperial interests and therefore keeping to basis of policy enunciated by His Majesty's Government for a year past. The writer thinks this attitude on the part of the Chancellor may mean 'a decisive evolution'. Turning to France he regrets tendencies appearing in the press of the Left and asks whether government shares opinion of *Populaire* that abolition of sanctions can be negotiated. For Italy the abolition of sanctions would have to precede 'the development of a new European situation.'

Dr. Gayda welcomes the Chancellor's 'courageous speech' while expressing reserve on two points. The confession that Italy was the Power against whom

¹ Mr. Chamberlain spoke at a dinner in his honour on the night of June 10 given by the 1900 Club at Grosvenor House. The speech was fully reported in *The Times* of June 11, p. 10. He said that Italy's aggression 'was patent and flagrant'. Nevertheless, the policy of collective security 'has been tried out and it has failed to prevent war, failed to stop war, failed to save the victim of the aggression. I am not blaming anyone for the failure.' It was necessary 'to draw what lessons and conclusions we can from those events . . . There are some people who do not desire to draw any conclusions at all.' He referred to a call by the President of the League of Nations Union for pressure on members of Parliament and the Government 'with the idea that if we were to pursue the policy of sanctions and even to intensify it, it was still possible to preserve the independence of Abyssinia. That seems to me the very midsummer of madness.' Such a course would lead only to further misfortunes and 'divert our minds as practical men from seeking other and better solutions'. He wished to restore the prestige and moral influence of the League; but it seemed 'quite impossible for us either to protect our own interests or to play an effective part in making an effective contribution to a system of collective security unless we are adequately armed'. Cf. K. Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London, 1946), pp. 295-7. Mr. Churchill spoke at the same meeting. He had been questioning for over a month the wisdom of continuing the application of sanctions (cf. *The Times*, May 9, 1936, p. 16), and he did not dissent from Mr. Chamberlain's view on the subject.

² Pressed by Mr. Attlee and others in the House of Commons on June 11 to say whether Mr. Chamberlain's remarks represented the policy of His Majesty's Government, Mr. Baldwin said that 'No conclusions on this matter have yet been reached': 313 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 401-3.

sanctions were most likely to be successful seems to Dr. Gayda 'to confirm by itself the violent injustice and immeasurable immorality of sanctionist policy'. In any event Italian resistance had proved what Fascist Italy was. The second point was the Chancellor's claim that Italy had been guilty of 'flagrant aggression.' But this charge ignored everything but the final act. These points apart, however, the Chancellor's speech was at once polemical and constructive. His programme agreed with ideas often expressed by Signor Mussolini one of which was the Four Power Pact. And the danger point [*sic*] Europe naturally associated Italy with England. It was enough to consider the Rhine and Central Europe and the Mediterranean and problems connected with it.

The Chancellor would recognise that Italy had left open all doors that would allow of a return to European collaboration. The interest of the speech lay in the hopes that it held out for construction in the future. The *Tribuna* prints an article by Signor Maraviglia who dealing with reform of the League approves of the idea but says that abolition of sanctions is 'the precondition of all preconditions.'

No. 363

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received June 13)

No. 141 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4279/4/18]

Very Confidential

BERLIN, June 12, 1936

Herr Hitler told a confidant this week that he would never have gone into the Rhineland unless Great Britain and Italy had been quarrelling. Sanctions had been a god-send to Germany. He praised Herr von Ribbentrop for advising the occupation on a Saturday when the members of the Cabinet were dispersed and no immediate counter-move could be decided on. He scouted the idea prevalent in some quarters abroad to the effect that Germans would have evacuated the Rhineland if the French had advanced.

Referring to Countess Ciano¹ Herr Hitler remarked that her father was the only man in Europe whose sword was sharp and who was ready to use it. The Chancellor, Doctor Goebbels and other Nazi leaders are vying with one another in showing her every possible personal attention.

The Chancellor said he felt unable to accept the terms recently offered by Doctor Schuschnigg for a settlement with Austria, those terms being too definitely based on complete Austrian independence.² He attached no particular importance to Herr Schuschnigg's last visit to Italy, but expressed satisfaction at Prince Starhemberg's eclipse.

The Chancellor declared that he was in no hurry to answer the British questionnaire. Time was on his side and in any case he proposed to await

¹ Signor Mussolini's daughter; cf. No. 371 below.

² Cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 294, 311, 321, 325, and 369.

some declaration by Monsieur Blum on French foreign policy. After all, the latter, being a Jew, might be unwilling to negotiate with him. Moreover he wished to see how the French strikes and sanctions embroglio developed.

He has not yet decided whom to appoint as Ambassador to London.³ Herr Dieckhoff⁴ could have the post for the asking but feels it his duty to stay here and use his influence with his relative, Herr von Ribbentrop, to save the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the maw of the Nazi party. Moreover this is the wish of Bülow.⁵

In conclusion Herr Hitler remarked that if he could live for another six years his name would be inscribed in brilliant letters in German history.

³ Cf. No. 241.

⁴ Herr Dieckhoff (see No. 86, note 1) became Director of the Political Department of the German Foreign Office in May 1936 and subsequently acting State Secretary.

⁵ Herr von Bülow was State Secretary in the German Foreign Ministry until his death on June 21, 1936.

No. 364

Record by Sir R. Vansittart of a conversation with M. Corbin

[J 5428/252/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 12, 1936

The French Ambassador came to see me this afternoon and enquired as to the real meaning of the recent speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in regard to sanctions.¹ He asked whether this represented the official view of His Majesty's Government, and what were our intentions.

I avoided answering this question and questioned him in turn in regard to the attitude of the French Government. It was quite plain from the attitude of the French Ambassador that his Government had no concrete ideas on the matter or any intention of taking an initiative, but that the French Ambassador and the Quai d'Orsay were most anxious to see sanctions disappear definitely and at the earliest possible moment for fear of the present Italian rapprochement with Germany being consolidated and confirmed. The Ambassador evidently thought there was no time to lose in this respect and expressed the liveliest apprehensions as to the dangers that would arise to his own country and indeed to this country if the system of sanctions, which he obviously regarded as being in any case doomed, were not speedily abolished.

R. V.

¹ Cf. No. 362, note 1.

*Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received June 16)**No. 687 [R 3488/241/22]*

ROME, June 12, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that Count Galeazzo Ciano came to pay a formal call on me this afternoon on his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs.¹ He was in a very friendly mood and laid much stress on his previous close collaboration and friendship with Sir Miles Lampson when they were together in China. He reminded me that he personally had been present on the Consuls' Committee in Shanghai during the Sino-Japanese troubles there.² I said to him that that Committee had acted in close touch with the Committee of the League of Nations when I was at Geneva and indeed had more or less received instructions from the latter. Count Ciano laughed at these reminiscences and said it was true that for a short time he had been a League of Nations official. We remarked how quickly things changed—he then added, 'Yes, but they can also change back'. A remark in which I think he was alluding to the Anglo-Italian friendship.

2. He then spoke of the interviews which you had had with Signor Grandi.³ He said that he was considering whether he would not ask Signor Grandi to come over to Rome for a few days, and intended to telephone him on the subject immediately. The points which you had put forward in that conversation were now under consideration and he hoped something might be possible, but of course he must make it perfectly clear to me that the Italian position in regard to Abyssinia was irrevocable. I asked him what he thought of the personal suggestion I had made of an annual report. He answered that he doubted whether an annual report would be possible, but a report occasionally might be. (I think that the Italian Government wish to avoid any action which might savour of the mandatory system, though they may be well prepared to accept the general principles laid down in Article 22 of the Covenant.) He indicated that his present idea was that a letter should be addressed to the Secretary General of the League, in which the suggested declarations would be made.

3. Finally he observed that he would be very grateful if in view of my long League experience I could give him any hints or advice as to the wording of these declarations. I replied that I could not of course take any responsibility in such a matter, though my personal advice would always be at his disposal. He then said that he hoped for close co-operation between us since in his view the 30th June would be a date pregnant of good or of evil.

4. The conversation took place in a very cordial atmosphere. I did not think it well at a first interview to remind him of the feelings which I necessarily entertained due to the attacks on my country made in the Italian press while he was Minister for Press and Propaganda.

¹ Cf. No. 359, note 1.² Cf. Volume X, No. 14, etc.³ See Nos. 347, 350, and 359; No. 360, note 4.

5. It may be of interest to add here that a few days before the announcement of Count Ciano's transference to the Palazzo Chigi was made, a member of the Soviet Embassy had a conversation with him. The two have been friends for some years past, their acquaintance dating from service together in China. In answer to his interlocutor's enquiries Count Ciano said that Italy's real wish was to be friends with everyone, and that they had no particular wish to court the Germans. On the other hand, public opinion in Great Britain was inflamed against Italy, France would count for nothing in Europe for some years as a result of the new alignment of parties in that country, and the U.S.S.R. system of government was essentially opposed to Fascism. There remained Germany, but Germany was in fact no more to them than any of the others. When asked about Austria, Count Ciano replied that for years it has been an axiom with the Italian Government that they could not afford to allow the Germans to take root on the other side of the Brenner. This position had, however, been modified as a result of the Abyssinian war. Italy was at last conscious of her strength and had no reason to fear the Germans; she could now more than hold her own against any single nation in Europe and the German bogey was laid. Count Ciano implied that Italy would be ready if Germany attempted to destroy Austrian independence. I will not comment on these views except to point out that Count Ciano's view that Italy is now the military equal of any other nation in Europe is at present very widely held in this country.⁴

I have, etc.,

ERIC DRUMMOND

⁴ Minutes commenting on this despatch included the following by Mr. Sargent, Mr. Eden, and Sir R. Vansittart. '... What do Count Ciano's remarks about the Brenner really mean? That Italy is now so strong & so self-confident that she does not mind if the Germans are on the Brenner. Or that she is so strong now that she is confident of being able to keep them from the Brenner by her own unaided efforts. O. G. Sargent. June 20.' 'Yes, distinctly enigmatic. A. E. June 22.' 'The tone of the last page is noteworthy! R. V. June 22.' The last page corresponded mainly with paragraph 5 of the despatch.

No. 366

Mr. Eden to Sir M. Lampson (Cairo)

No. 325 Telegraphic [J 5367/4044/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 13, 1936, 9.20 p.m.*

Following for Khartoum.

Ethiopian Minister¹ here is pressing for assurance that rifle ammunition and possibly other munitions may be despatched into Western Abyssinia

¹ A note in this file states that Dr. Martin and the Ethiopian Foreign Minister (who had arrived in London independently of the Emperor) called on Mr. Eden on June 13 to enquire whether the route into Western Ethiopia via the Sudan could now be regarded as open for the despatch of munitions.

through the Sudan and Gambeila. He indicates that the quantity will be relatively small.

I feel that it would be difficult to refuse permission, provided we are satisfied that the munitions will not be left to accumulate in the Gambeila enclave.

Unless you see other objection, I should be glad if you would endeavour to ascertain as soon as possible whether Ras Imeru or such other Abyssinian leaders as there may be in Gore represent a constituted Abyssinian authority and are in a position to maintain communications between that place and Gambeila.

Egyptian Government may have to be approached at a later date.

No. 367

Mr. Kelly¹ (Cairo) to Mr. Eden (Received June 15, 8.20 p.m.)

No. 55² Telegraphic [J 5405/4044/1]

CAIRO, June 15, 1936, 8.22 p.m. [*sic*]

Following from Khartoum.

Addressed to Cairo No. 93 of June 14th.

Following from Erskine for Foreign Office No. 77 of June 10th. Begins.

A delegation of Galla chiefs wish to relay via Khartoum to League of Nations to plead for a British government mandate for west of longitude (36).²

All Galla chiefs refuse to be represented by their enemies and oppressors, Amharic delegation now in London, who have been parasites on the people of Abyssinia and three quarters of Galla and who have taken no part in the war. Ends.

My telegram 92³ and my Saving telegram 6³ refers.

Repeated to Addis Ababa No. 62.

¹ Mr. D. V. Kelly was Counsellor at H.M. High Commission in Cairo, and Acting High Commissioner.

² So emended in filed copy following a subsequent telegram from Mr. Erskine.

³ Not printed.

No. 368

Record by Mr. Eden of a conversation with Mr. te Water

[C 4401/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 15, 1936

Mr. te Water asked to see me this morning, when he stated that he wished to make plain to me his Government's attitude towards the maintenance of sanctions and the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.¹ Their view had not changed.

¹ Cf. No. 355.

They were in favour of the maintenance of sanctions until Italy would accept to come to a table and negotiate. Mr. te Water thought, however, that his Government would agree to a compromise on the lines of the suggestions which had been made by Mr. Bruce at the last meeting of the representatives of the High Commissioners, i.e. that when the Assembly met it should take note of the absence of the Italians from the Assembly and in the circumstances immediately appoint a Committee, whose functions would be to endeavour to keep contact with the Italian Government and to report either before, or at the latest at, the next Assembly in September; sanctions meanwhile to continue. Mr. te Water emphasised that he was confident that his Government could agree to some such proposal as that.

On the other hand if the view of His Majesty's Government was that sanctions should be raised he regretted to have to say that his Government could not support us. On the contrary they would be obliged to take the opposite view. His instructions were that he was to state that view clearly and emphatically at Geneva, and to do what he could to secure support for it.

I thanked Mr. te Water for giving me this information and told him in reply that my difficulty had always been to believe that the maintenance of sanctions would have the result at which the South African Government aimed. Was it not more likely to lead to Italy's withdrawal from the League, with the result that in September we should be in the same position as we were today, except that the purpose for which we had maintained sanctions was no nearer, and as likely as not the sanctions front would have crumbled? Mr. te Water, however, maintained that the attitude of his Government was the only one which was consistent with the policy hitherto pursued by the Governments of the Commonwealth, and consistent also with the speech of Sir S. Hoare last September.²

Mr. te Water then spoke of Germany. He said that Mr. Pirow had made it plain to the German Government through the South African Minister in Berlin that he would be willing to proceed to Berlin if his visit could be made to synchronise with a visit of a British Minister.³ Mr. Pirow made it clear that he was not prepared to go alone. Latest reports from Berlin, however, showed that the German Government were definitely not anxious for such a visit at present. He, Mr. te Water, regretted this because he thought that Mr. Pirow might have been useful in Berlin in the company of a British Minister. He asked me whether I had any information as to the German attitude, and I replied that my impression was the same as his. The German Government were not anxious for a Ministerial visit, nor were they anxious to answer our questions. I thought it probable that they would now await the outcome of the Assembly meeting before sending us a reply. Mr. te Water maintained that the stronger our attitude towards Italy the more surely would Germany's respect be gained. It was, he thought, worth noting that Germany had chosen the moment when the Chancellor of the Exchequer's

² Volume XIV, Appendix IV.

³ *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 367.

speech⁴ had indicated our intention to raise sanctions to intensify her negotiations with Italy.⁵

A. E.

⁴ See No. 362, note 1.

⁵ Mr. Eden told the Cabinet on June 23 that Mr. Pirow had now received a second invitation from the German Government to go to Berlin. According to the Cabinet Conclusions of that meeting, Mr. Eden suggested 'that Mr. Pirow should be asked to reply by suggesting to the German Government that perhaps they could facilitate the visit by a British Minister by giving a constructive answer to the questions recently addressed to them by His Majesty's Government. The Cabinet approved the above.'

No. 369

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received June 16, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 192 Telegraphic [C 4342/4/18]

BERLIN, June 16, 1936, 2.35 p.m.

I called this morning on the Minister for Foreign Affairs who has been for some weeks unwell in south Germany.¹

I again urged despatch of German reply to our questionnaire. His Excellency said he had drafted it some time ago and that it had ever since been with the Chancellor whom he will see tomorrow.

Baron von Neurath said that Herr Hitler will probably not be willing to send a full reply until (1) the position in France became clearer and (2) the policy of His Majesty's Government regarding sanctions and collective security was definitely fixed.

As regards (1) His Excellency said that his information from Paris led him to believe that the French Government were full of good intentions towards Germany and were even ready, unlike their predecessors, to start direct conversations with the German Government but that it was very doubtful if they had the power to put these good intentions into practice.

With regard to (2) it was evident that Herr Hitler would wish to see daylight before giving any full and definite reply.

Baron von Neurath admitted however that it would be quite possible to reply to several of our questions without regard to the above considerations and he will urge this course upon Herr Hitler tomorrow. Incidentally he hopes also to extract from him a decision regarding London Embassy.²

¹ For Baron von Neurath's account of this interview see *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 375.

² Commenting on this telegram, Mr. Wigram remarked that evidently the German Government wished to keep its hands free, and asked whether 'perhaps we too have much to gain by not precipitating the day when the difference between us and Germany will become clear to everyone, even to those who now talk so lightly of Anglo-German understanding'. But what 'is going to be said to the French at Geneva when they plead, with some justice, that the "effort of conciliation" has failed? R. F. Wigram. 17/6.' Mr. Sargent replied: 'But surely the answer is that the effort of conciliation will only have failed when we have received, studied, and rejected the German answer to our questionnaire. O. G. Sargent. June 17th, 1936.' Mr. Eden marked this comment 'Yes. A. E.' In a memorandum also of

June 17 Mr. Wigram said that he had discussed the German Government's attitude towards the British questionnaire that morning with Prince Bismarck, who gave no indication of having the least idea as to what the German Government's policy was. Cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 379.

No. 370

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received June 17, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 384 Telegraphic [J 5433/84/1]

ROME, June 17, 1936, 2.15 a.m.

My despatch No. 687, second paragraph.¹

When I returned Count Ciano's call this evening he informed me of the latest instructions which had been sent to Signor Grandi and of the interview the latter had had with Sir R. Vansittart in accordance with their terms.² He went on to say that note to President of the Assembly was still being drafted but he hoped to send resumé of it to Signor Grandi within a few days' time and would equally communicate copy to me.

Speaking of my Argentine colleague's plan (my despatch No. 694)³ he asserted again with some emphasis that the Italian Government could not agree to the despatch to Abyssinia of a League Commission.

¹ No. 365.

² Cf. No. 360, note 6.

³ Of June 13, not printed. It reported that M. Cantilo, the Argentine Ambassador at Rome, had suggested on the authority of the Argentine Foreign Minister, M. Lamas, that Italy should address a note to the President of the Assembly of a deferential character after which the Assembly might set up a commission to examine Italian plans and conditions of peace as set out in the note.

No. 371

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received June 17, 3.55 p.m.)

No. 194 Telegraphic [C 4376/4/18]

BERLIN, June 17, 1936, 1.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 192.¹

I hear from a very good source that the Chancellor is in great form and has no intention of replying seriously to our questions. Indeed he is rather disposed to answer with his tongue in his cheek to question about Germany's future respect for treaties, and to refer to English and French default over American debts, showing that the vital interests of a country always override treaty obligations. He is at times disposed to answer innocuous questions only.

The Chancellor feels that present situation in Europe is ideal for him.

¹ No. 369.

France is very embarrassed internally and is faced with grave financial crisis. Even when sanctions cease the Left parties will hardly resume cordial relations with Italy or be able to shake off Russian influence, and his reports tell him that French influence with the Little Entente etc. is rapidly waning. The Chancellor's happiness would be complete if Labour came into office in England and based their policy on letters which appear in the 'Times', especially those over several signatures. He reads these letters with particular satisfaction. He thinks there is trouble ahead for us in the Far East which will distract our attention from Europe.

As regards Italy Chancellor is embarrassed by Mussolini's advances and by the presence here of Countess Ciano² (for whom he is regretfully giving a small dinner tonight and who clings to Berlin where she is enjoying herself;) he is somewhat pre-occupied about a possible Hapsburg restoration in Austria though he counts on Yugoslav resistance. He is inclined still to think British influence is favourable to restoration. He now regards Doctor Schuschnigg as a more redoubtable adversary than Doctor Dol[1]fuss, particularly in view of his courageous attitude over sanctions. The Chancellor continues to express feeling of admiration for Great Britain and the British people but finds what he describes as British interference in Europe embarrassing. What he really hankers after however is a[n] Anglo-German understanding, to the exclusion of third or fourth parties.

² Cf. No. 363.

No. 372

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 209 Telegraphic [R 3533/226/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 17, 1936, 10.10 p.m.*

At the end of May¹ Sir R. Vansittart saw the Italian Ambassador and told him that in his opinion Signor Mussolini would be wise to make a constructive contribution, which could only come about by a satisfactory reassuring declaration to the League.

Sir Robert and the Ambassador on June 12th² went over the ground at greater length. It was explained to Signor Grandi that the traditional Anglo-Italian friendship had been strained to breaking-point by our very different conceptions of League membership. Our ways had parted at Geneva and it was only via Geneva that they could be brought together again within measurable time. Sir Robert repeated that no direct or separate Anglo-Italian negotiation was possible and that any assurances which Italy gave must be addressed to the world at large, and be of a broad and generous nature, and it was again urged on Signor Grandi that the only effective course would be to give these assurances to the League.

¹ See No. 347.

² Cf. No. 360, note 6.

The Ambassador replied that he quite saw the validity of this advice, but he expressed considerable doubt whether it would be possible to act upon it. Would it not be sufficient, he asked, if Signor Mussolini made a sufficiently reassuring public declaration by way of a speech? He was told again that this appeared to be very emphatically a second best course and he was strongly advised to adopt the former. Were this advice followed it was fairly certain that it would have a good effect not only in this country but at Geneva; but Sir Robert emphasised again that there could be no thought of any bargain or undertaking and that the whole value of the idea must necessarily reside in the action being taken purely spontaneously and without any conditions by Signor Mussolini himself. Indeed no other course would seem compatible with Italy's own conception of her dignity or interest; and in this view the Ambassador entirely concurred. It was pointed out that if once Signor Mussolini could make up his mind to this course he would assuredly find that any difficulties in the way looked greater from afar than when closely confronted. Surely Signor Mussolini should wish to make these declarations spontaneously and usefully, seeing that he had already made a great part of them by way of newspaper interviews. The latter was the right thing done in the wrong way. What he should now do, so Sir Robert suggested, would be to resume and expand these assurances in regard to treatment of the native population, facilities for trade, renunciation of recruiting of a black army, and so forth, in the form of a communication addressed to Geneva. Sir Robert could, of course, give no undertaking as regards the effect of this step, but he repeated that he thought it would be good.

On June 15th Signor Grandi came to see Sir Robert again in a cheerful mood. He said that he had been successful in persuading his Government, on the strength of the advice stated above, to make a declaration at Geneva, that it was already in course of preparation and that it would be made not to the Secretary-General of the League but to the President of the Council, as Signor Mussolini thought that that would be doing the thing more handsomely. The Ambassador then proceeded to refer to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in regard to sanctions, and to the misuse made of it by the press.³ He showed some anxiety on this score and seemed to apprehend that the alleged split in the Cabinet might portend a more rigorous attitude towards Italy. Sir Robert referred in turn to the various newspapers concerned and explained to the Ambassador in some detail their reasons for endeavouring to create an incident or some sort of a storm in the matter. All these endeavours would fail because the alleged incident was wholly unreal, and so malicious a fiction as that of a split in the Cabinet and the allegation of impending resignation was bound to fail and fail very speedily because of their inherent untruth. The Ambassador knew enough of London to realise this for himself. The Ambassador asked if Sir Robert was still an optimist as to the good effect of the impending declaration at Geneva. It was clear that a discouraging answer on his part at this juncture might have caused an eleventh hour hesitation in Rome. Sir Robert therefore replied

³ See No. 362, note 1.

that he was in fact still an optimist because he paid no attention to these press manifestations. Signor Grandi could certainly tell his Government that it was wholly untrue that there was any split in the Cabinet or that anybody was going to resign. On the contrary the Chancellor of the Exchequer and myself had always been good friends and colleagues and would always remain so. More than that Sir Robert would not say, and Signor Grandi must draw his own conclusions from it, and it was again made clear to the Ambassador that in any case there was no question of any bargaining or condition. If Signor Mussolini thought that the advice that had been given to Signor Grandi was wise, he must act on it with complete spontaneity without a suggestion of prompting by anyone in the world, and his assurances, in the best form that he could give to them, must be addressed to the world in its widest form, that is at Geneva.

The Ambassador left saying that he was quite satisfied with what had been said to him and that the Italian declaration would doubtless now go forward.

No. 373

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 151 Telegraphic [J 5466/216/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 19, 1936, 7.30 p.m.*

In the course of an interview with the French Ambassador on June 17th (record of which is being sent to you by bag)¹ I told him the gist of what I should say in the House of Commons², and enquired if he could tell me

¹ Not printed.

² In the debate on foreign policy in the House of Commons on June 18, Mr. Eden surveyed the history of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, and said, with regard to the question of sanctions: 'We cannot tell what will be the views of the various Governments represented [at the forthcoming meeting of the League Assembly], but His Majesty's Government, after mature consideration, on advice which I as Foreign Secretary thought it my duty to give them, have come to the conclusion that there is no longer any utility in continuing these measures as a means of pressure upon Italy.' 313 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 1201. Later in the same debate he said: '... we assured certain Mediterranean countries that we would come to their aid in the event of their being attacked for action which they were taking under Article 16. It is the view of the Government that this assurance given by this country should not end with the raising of sanctions but should continue to cover the period of uncertainty which must necessarily follow any termination of action under Article 16. Therefore, should the Assembly at the end of the month decide to raise sanctions, His Majesty's Government intend, with a view to making their contribution to establishing confidence in the regions concerned, to state at Geneva that such are their views. I need hardly add that the Government regarded any such eventuality as those assurances covered not only as hypothetical but as improbable. . . obviously, these assurances would be intended to operate only so long as in the opinion of the Government they remain appropriate to the circumstances. . . Moreover, in the light of the experience of recent months the Government have determined that it is necessary that we should maintain permanently in the Mediterranean a defensive position stronger than that which existed before this dispute began. Arrangements will be made to carry out that declaration. . .' *Ibid.*, cols. 1204-5.

before the debate that the French Government were in agreement with the course which we proposed. He informed Sir R. Vansittart on June 18th that he had put this question to Paris but that the French Government did not feel able to commit themselves at such very short notice on so important a question. They have as yet made no definite pronouncement on foreign policy and could not very well envisage their first important pronouncement being made through the mouth of the British Foreign Secretary. Nor could they very well commit themselves in advance to concurrence in my proposed statement, of which they had not the text but only a general idea received through M. Corbin. There would, however, be a meeting of French Ministers on June 19th at which the question of sanctions would be considered, of course in the light of what I had said.

The Ambassador seemed very confident that all would be well.³ Sir R. Vansittart said that he sincerely hoped the French Government would indeed feel able to follow the lead given by His Majesty's Government. A divergence of view would be a serious matter, and if as M. Blum had said, his firm intention and policy was one of close collaboration with His Majesty's Government, it was essential that this should be shown as early as possible on this question of sanctions.

³ Sir G. Clerk's telegram No. 236 of June 19 to the Foreign Office said that a *communiqué* issued after the meeting of the French Council of Ministers had stated that the Council considered the existing circumstances to favour the removal of sanctions.

CHAPTER V

German delay in reply to British questionnaire: meeting of Locarno Powers in London: report of the Plymouth Committee

June 22–July 30, 1936

No. 374

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received June 22, 7.10 p.m.)

No. 198 Telegraphic [C 4525/4/18]

BERLIN, June 22, 1936, 6.5 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 194,¹ 196² and Sir E. Drummond's telegram No. 395.³

I learn from a well informed source that German reply, such as it is, should have been handed to me on June 19th but that the Chancellor after reading debate in the House decided to await Geneva meetings.

The Chancellor is obsessed with the theory of *Gleichberechtigung* and idea that Germany is being addressed, even by us, in terms which Japan or the United States would resent, infuriates him.

His insistence on equality is of course wisely tempered by estimation of Germany's strength at a given moment. I fear so long as the countries on whose behalf we are putting questions are divided among themselves, he will take advantage of the situation. With the present European constellation we cannot rule out the possibility that our questions may never be answered or that any answer may be quite perfunctory.

¹ No. 371.

² This telegram from Sir E. Phipps of June 19 (J 5537/561/1) referred to Berlin press comments on Mr. Eden's speech of June 18 (cf. No. 373, note 2) and remarked that the *Völkischer Beobachter* London correspondent 'expresses his displeasure at Mr. Baldwin's remarks about the new Germany'. See No. 375, note 2, below.

³ No. 375 below.

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received June 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 395 Telegraphic [C 4493/4/18]

Personal

ROME, June 22, 1936, 9.29 p.m.

German Ambassador who is just back from Berlin told me last night¹ that there was a general feeling in favour of an understanding with Great Britain. An answer to our questionnaire was being completed. Of course all our questions would not be answered, one reason being that Germany was unwilling to bind herself definitely for the future while Great Britain and France remained free.

His Excellency added that he feared that the Prime Minister's allusion to Germany in his speech in the House of Commons on June 18th had not made things easier.² Prime Minister had seemed to cast suspicion at the sincerity of Herr Hitler's peace proposals reply, spoken of 'testing' or 'trying out'. His Excellency said that it was likely the effect of this speech would be a considerable postponement, and might lead to abandonment of any German reply. Herr Hitler's personal feeling, His Excellency indicated, would be affected by the doubt thus raised.³

I only telegraph this because of Tuesday's debate.⁴

I have repeated this telegram personally to Sir E. Phipps.

¹ June 20; this telegram was drafted on June 21.

² In the course of this speech Mr. Baldwin said that Communism in Germany had been beaten by 'another creed of violence and force . . . Yet Herr Hitler has told us that he wishes for peace, and if a man tells me that, as I have said in this House before, I wish to try it out. I come back to what I said a few months ago. I cannot see exactly now when or how the next opportunity may come, but, as the Foreign Secretary said, we are hoping to bring the French, the Germans and ourselves into conference for the better security of the peace of Europe. The part that Germany can play for good or for evil in Europe is immense, and if we believe the opportunity is presented, let us do what we can to use it for good. . . ' (313 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1238-9). Earlier in the debate (col. 1208) Mr. Eden said that after taking office he had instructed Sir E. Phipps 'to tell Herr Hitler that I shared the view he had expressed as to the importance of close collaboration and understanding between Great Britain, France and Germany'. Cf. No. 373, note 2.

³ Sir R. Vansittart and Mr. Eden minuted as follows. 'Some fresh cause of complaint—and delay—is always being invented by Germany. To pitch on Mr. Baldwin's speech is the latest and thinnest ground. It was meant to be very conciliatory. R. V. June 23.' 'I agree. A. E. June 24.'

⁴ i.e. the Supply Committee debate on foreign policy in the House of Commons on June 23; see 313 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1605-1730. Mr. Baldwin spoke last in the debate; cols. 1718-30.

Record by Mr. R. A. Leeper of a conversation with Mr. A. L. Kennedy
 [C 4593/4/r8]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 22, 1936

Mr. Kennedy of 'The Times' lunched with me to-day on his return from Germany. Amongst many interesting things he told me, he laid chief emphasis on the following.

He regarded it as vitally important that the Secretary of State should seize the first available opportunity to state in the House of Commons in very firm and unmistakable language that we regard it as essential that the German Government should return an answer to the questionnaire we had sent at the earliest possible date; that we have shown from the very beginning a desire to enter upon those wider negotiations which had been foreshadowed in Herr Hitler's declaration of March 7th,¹ but that until the German Government responded to the attempts which we had made, it was impossible to make the progress so desired.

Mr. Kennedy emphasised that the Germans were simply delaying and prevaricating, and he suspected that in September, at the Nuremberg Party Congress, Herr Hitler would make a flaming speech announcing that he had put forward proposals for a 25 years' peace last March, but that the Governments of Europe had shown little desire to respond and had ignored the wider aspects of those proposals.

Mr. Kennedy has returned from Berlin with an entirely different outlook from what he had before he went. He criticised strongly the 'soft' policy of 'The Times' towards Germany, saying that it has created an entirely wrong impression amongst the Germans who are living, breathing and thinking only of German aggrandisement and are laughing at us as mere weaklings.² He urged me to put forward this view as strongly as I could as coming from him who has seen with his own eyes what was happening in Germany; that it was of the greatest importance that the British Government should tell the Germans off as firmly and as sharply as possible at the earliest possible opportunity.³

R. A. LEEPER

¹ See No. 42, Enclosure.

² The editorial policy of *The Times* towards Germany at this period is briefly described in *The History of The Times* (London, 1952), Part II, pp. 898-903.

³ Minutes by Mr. Wigram and Sir R. Vansittart were as follows. 'I understand that the idea now is to leave the Germans alone and not express further wishes for an early reply. That policy would seem to meet Mr. Kennedy's point. R. F. W. 29/6.'

'According to the *Times* this morning [July 4, p. 14] it seems to be in contemplation that the Germans shd be invited to a conference whether they reply or not. I do not yet know whether this is authentic or not, but if it is, it will not be possible to meet Mr. Kennedy's advice, which is otherwise very good. I cannot let this paper pass without drawing attention to the completeness with which, out of the very mouth of the strongest of our adversaries & critics in the *Times* itself, it bears out the F.O. against the *Times*, which has been a minor national disaster for years in the hands of poor Mr. Dawson. This is the conclusion of a

long chapter, & I register it without surprise; for in any divergence of view on foreign politics between the *Times* and the F.O., one might always lay 100 to 1 on the F.O. & make money. R. V. July 4.' The passage in *The Times* referred to above was evidently based on information about discussions in Geneva: cf. No. 394 below. These papers were seen by Mr. Eden and Lord Cranborne.

No. 377

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 1110 [C 4507/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 22, 1936*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation today the French Ambassador said that the French Government were anxious for a meeting of the Locarno Powers during the meeting of the Council or the Assembly. They would like Italy to be invited to this meeting. Would His Majesty's Government be willing to fall in with this suggestion?

2. I replied that I would consider the Ambassador's suggestion and let him have a reply in due course. In the meanwhile so far as I understood the position, Italy would not be represented at the Assembly. The Ambassador rejoined that even so the French Government would like to invite them to co-operate.

3. The Ambassador then went on to speak of the Prime Minister's speech in the Debate last Thursday,¹ when the Ambassador stated that he had referred to the possibility of a meeting between three Powers—Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Was this suggestion something new, or did it arise out of earlier declarations of His Majesty's Government's policy?

4. I replied that the suggestion was not new, and that I was confident that what the Prime Minister had in mind was a meeting for the reconstruction of security in Western Europe. Such a meeting had in fact been foreshadowed in the agreement reached at the meeting of the Locarno Powers in London in March.²

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

¹ See No. 375, note 2.

² See Chapter II. In a minute of June 24 Mr. C. J. Norton recorded a conversation that morning with the Belgian Ambassador, who said that a new government had taken office in Belgium which would prefer postponement of a meeting of Locarno powers, as it would find it 'very difficult for a strong delegation to go during the next few days'. The Foreign Office view was that there should be no meeting at any rate during the forthcoming session of the Council and Assembly at Geneva. Mr. Eden said that he would speak to M. Blum to this effect (cf. No. 397 below).

Memorandum by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin on the Report of the Plymouth Committee¹

[C 5185/97/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 23, 1936

The Committee's Report has been circulated to the C.I.D.² It will not, however, come up for discussion by the C.I.D. unless it is put on the C.I.D. agenda by the Prime Minister. I am informed by the Colonial Office that the Prime Minister is demurring to putting it on the agenda; in this case, the Report will be filed away by the C.I.D. and it will not reach the Cabinet.

The reason for the Prime Minister's inaction, so I am told, is that he may remain free to state that the question of a transfer is not under consideration by the Government.

It will, however, be a handicap to the development of our policy towards Germany if we do not get a Cabinet ruling on this question, and that ruling can, I think, most conveniently and appropriately be given on the very full and sensible Report submitted by the Plymouth Committee.

I suggest that the department should report the situation to the Secretary of State and ask him to press for full consideration of, and suitable direction on, the Report.³

F. A. GWATKIN

¹ See No. 50. The report on 'the question of the possible transfer of a Colonial Mandate or Mandates to Germany' had just been completed, and was dated June 9, 1936. It is printed in Appendix III below, with a number of Foreign Office minutes commenting on it.

² The committee was a Sub-Committee of the C.I.D.

³ Mr. Wigram, in the course of a minute expressing the hope that the report would go to the Cabinet, remarked that uncertainty as to the British Government's attitude appeared to be encouraging the German colonial campaign. Speaking of Herr Hitler's 'veiled request for a mandate' during his conversation with Sir J. Simon on March 25, 1935 [Volume XII, No. 651], he remarked: 'Our Military Attaché was told at the time by Germans that Herr Hitler and the German Delegation had expected Sir John to fly into a rage when the statement about colonies was made. Had that been done, the Military Attaché was told and people in our Embassy believed, the colonial campaign would not have developed in the way it has since done.' Mr. Sargent and Sir R. Vansittart both deplored the suggestion that the report should be pigeon-holed (June 24). No comment by Mr. Eden appears on the file. The report was, however, considered by the C.I.D. at its meeting on July 10 as C.I.D. Paper No. 1236-B. It was noted that it had already been referred by the Cabinet to the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy.

No. 379

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received June 25)

No. 154 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4576/4/18]

BERLIN, June 24, 1936

My telegram No. 103 (Saving) of April 30th.¹

The Belgian Minister tells me that German advances to him continue.

Herr von Ribbentrop, on his return from his last visit to England, asked Vicomte Davignon to call, and kept him in close conversation for two hours. Vicomte Davignon's impression is that the Germans would like to induce Belgium to conclude a bilateral non-aggression pact with them and that they would, in that event, be ready to place Eupen and Malmédy in cold storage (as they have done with the Polish corridor), until they are strong enough to re-take those districts.

Herr von Ribbentrop was, Vicomte Davignon told me, clearly anxious to efface the lamentable impression made by his rudeness to Comte Kerchove, reported in my telegram No. 235 (Saving)² of October 16th last.

Herr von Ribbentrop, it seems, was not too pleased by his visit to England. He complained that Great Britain, instead of acting like she should, as 'arbitrator' between France and Germany, persisted in maintaining a 'Versailles' attitude, and he was annoyed because His Majesty's Government, in their questionnaire, had not condemned the Franco-Soviet Treaty.³

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps reported Vicomte Davignon as saying that all official Germans were showing a 'particular desire to be friendly to him', and that Baron von Neurath had told him that the 'occupation of the demilitarized zone was not in any way directed against Belgium'.

² Not printed.

³ Cf. *D.D.B.*, vol. iv, No. 83.

No. 380

Record¹ by Mr. Eden of a conversation with Mr. Pirow

[C 4611/97/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 25, 1936

Mr. Pirow came to see me this morning for a final talk² before his departure for South Africa. I told him that I had been considering the message which he had sent me through Sir Campbell Stuart³ about the possibility of a visit by Mr. Pirow to Germany. As I understood the position Mr. Pirow had replied that he was not prepared to go to Berlin unless a British Minister could accompany him. Mr. Pirow said that that was the position. I continued that during the last few days I had been carefully considering this question of a visit by a British Minister, and I had come to the conclusion

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet.

² Cf. Nos. 355 and 368.

³ Chairman of the Imperial Communications Advisory Committee since 1933.

that it was quite impossible for us to put out any further feelers showing that we should wish to be invited. In my view we had done all we could in this direction. Our position must now be that it was not possible for a British minister to accept an invitation to Berlin unless and until the German Government had returned a constructive answer to the questions which had been sent to them.

2. Mr. Pirow replied that he fully agreed with this point of view. The Germans had now delayed so long in replying that it would be a mistake to show any willingness to go to Berlin before the reply was received. His own impression was that there must have been some contact between Rome and Berlin. Herr Hitler must at least feel confident that there was no danger of a restoration of the Stresa front. In any event Mr. Pirow had thought he noticed distinct signs of stiffening in the German attitude lately, and in those circumstances he was sure that I was right in making no further overtures to Berlin.

3. We then spoke of the colonial question, and I asked Pirow what was his view as to the advisability of His Majesty's Government making plain their position in respect to Africa and the German demands at an early date. He would have noticed that Herr Hitler had not yet committed himself on the colonial question. I thought it unlikely that he would do so at least until the Olympic Games were over.⁴ If this was the position was there not much to be said for His Majesty's Government making clear their position before the German Chancellor committed himself irrevocably? Then if, as I suspected was still the case, the Chancellor wanted to remain on reasonably good terms with us, he might refrain from tabling his demands. In my view there was all the more to be said for this course if we could accompany any declaration that was made by some fresh statement relating to an enquiry in respect of raw materials, which might for instance be proposed as a task for the Assembly in September.

4. Mr. Pirow replied that the arguments I had used appealed to him strongly. He too had noticed that Herr Hitler had not yet committed himself, and he shared my view that it was preferable that we should state our position before he did so. In all this he thought the South African Government would be in full agreement, and knowing the German temperament as he did he felt sure the line I proposed was right. At the same time we must leave Herr Hitler some back door, and he thought an enquiry into raw materials was too narrow. He would like some formula which showed that while refusing Tanganyika or South-west Africa we appreciated that there was a German colonial problem. I replied that the difficulty I saw in Mr. Pirow's suggestion was that such a declaration might be interpreted as saying that no part of the British Commonwealth was to be touched, but Herr Hitler was welcome to help himself to the colonies of the unhappy Portuguese. Mr. Pirow admitted the force of this, but maintained that it should be possible to find some form of words in a declaration which did a little more than merely suggest an enquiry into raw materials, without leaving others in the lurch.

⁴ These were due to take place in Germany in August.

If we could contrive something of this kind, then we should leave Herr Hitler with a back door, by which he could get out, and Herr Hitler would be in need of this in order to meet the arguments of Schacht, von Ribbentrop, von Seeckt and others.

5. Mr. Pirow emphasised that he had made it clear, as I understood, to the German Minister to the Union,⁵ that in no circumstances would the Union agree to the cession of Tanganyika, and he thought that it was owing to this declaration that the Germans were so anxious to get him to Berlin. In present circumstances, however, he did not propose to go.

6. In a reference to His Majesty's Government's policy about sanctions Mr. Pirow admitted, speaking purely privately, that he did not see what other course we could have taken than that which had been adopted, 'but' he added 'you are a curious people and when you do take what appears to be the obvious course, that is the occasion when your public is most angry with you'. Nonetheless Mr. de Water would make an impassioned speech at Geneva in favour of maintenance of sanctions. 'No doubt', Mr. Pirow concluded 'it is easier for us to be consistent in these matters, than for a country which has your responsibilities.'

A. E.

⁵ Herr Emil Wiehl.

No. 381

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)

No. 730 [C 4535/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 25, 1936*

Sir,

With reference to your despatch No. 616¹ of June 16th, I transmit to Your Excellency herewith copies of a preliminary report from the Admiralty,¹ a memorandum prepared in the Foreign Office¹ and two Parliamentary Questions and the answer thereto concerning the re-fortification of Heligoland.¹

2. Although Article 115 of the Treaty of Versailles, which deals with the fortification of Heligoland, is included in Part III (Political Clauses) of the Treaty and not in Part V (Military, Naval and Air Clauses), it must presumably be regarded as covered by the German Chancellor's statement on May 21st, 1935,² that 'the German Government have, as a result of the non-fulfilment of the undertaking to disarm on the part of other States, for their part renounced the Articles which, as a result of the one-sided burden laid on Germany by the Treaty, constitute a discrimination against the German nation for an unlimited period'. Article 115 would seem, therefore, to have been disavowed last year by the German Government together with the Military, Naval and Air Clauses. This interpretation is moreover borne out by the statement made to you by Herr von Bülow on the 31st May 1935 in

¹ Not printed.

² Cf. Volume XIII, No. 222, note 1.

elucidation of the Führer's speech (see your telegram No. 222 of May 31st, 1935).³

3. On the assumption that this view is correct—a fact which need not be mentioned in any communication Your Excellency may make to the German Government on the subject—I should be grateful if, by whatever means you consider best (possibly you may prefer to act through the Naval Attaché), you would cause the German Government to be informed that reports have reached His Majesty's Government that the island is being re-fortified and that it would be of interest to know what are the intentions of the German Government in the matter.⁴

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

³ Volume XIII, No. 273.

⁴ During a conversation with Herr Dieckhoff on July 1, recorded in despatch No. 678 of July 2, Mr. Newton, on Sir E. Phipps's instructions, enquired 'in as informal manner as possible' as to German intentions regarding the refortification of Heligoland. Herr Dieckhoff promised to refer to the competent authorities.

No. 382

Mr. Eden to Sir N. Henderson (Buenos Aires)

No. 273 [J 5623/84/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 25, 1936*

Sir,

The Argentine Ambassador came to see Lord Cranborne on the 19th June. He said that my speech had obviously greatly cleared the situation, and he would be able to inform his Government of the exact attitude of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom towards the problem of sanctions.¹ He would, however, like to ask two definite questions, in order that he might communicate the reply to his Government.

2. First, was it the view of His Majesty's Government that the Argentine representative should initiate the discussion at Geneva? Lord Cranborne said that he understood that that would be regarded as natural and proper. It was the Argentine Government's initiative which had led to the calling of the Assembly,² and it would be logical that they should open the discussion and explain the reasons for their move. To this his Excellency assented. He enquired, further, whether Lord Cranborne thought it desirable that the Argentine representative should, in the course of his remarks, indicate the attitude of his Government towards sanctions? Lord Cranborne said that this was obviously a matter for the Argentine Government to decide, but that, speaking personally, he thought it would be useful that a line should be given early in the discussion. His Excellency indicated that any line they took would conform to that already expressed by His Majesty's Government.

3. Señor Malbrán then passed to the question of the recognition of Italy's

¹ Cf. No. 373, note 2.

² Cf. No. 348.

annexation of Ethiopia. What was the attitude of His Majesty's Government to this question? He would wish to inform his Government. Lord Cranborne said that he understood that it would be the view of His Majesty's Government that it was not a matter on which a definite decision should be taken at the present Assembly, but that, if the subject was raised and a decision was pressed for they would be opposed to recognition of the annexation of Ethiopia at the present Assembly. The Ambassador explained that he found himself in rather a difficult position on this question. If it was accepted that the war had come to an end, there seemed no valid reason for refusing to recognise the annexation. If, on the other hand, it was held that the war had not come to an end, there seemed no valid reason for raising economic sanctions. He had thought of a possible method of approach. It might be said by the Argentine representative that his Government regarded non-recognition as a sanction. They advocated the raising of economic sanctions because this particular form of pressure had proved ineffective, but they felt that some sanction should still be maintained. They therefore were opposed to recognition of the annexation of Ethiopia. His Excellency asked whether Lord Cranborne thought that this was a possible line of approach? The latter replied that it was not for him to dictate, or even to suggest what line the Argentine Government should take, but that he thought it a most ingenious suggestion.

4. In conclusion, the Argentine Ambassador said that he would report to his Government what Lord Cranborne had said with regard to the view of His Majesty's Government concerning the suggestion that the Argentine representative should initiate the discussion at the Assembly, and the attitude of His Majesty's Government with regard to the recognition of the Italian annexation of Ethiopia.

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 383

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 26, 9 p.m.)

No. 66¹ Telegraphic [J 5770/84/1]

GENEVA, June 26, 1936, 7.16 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.²

Permanent Italian representative at Geneva³ came this afternoon to

¹ This telegram was despatched in advance of No. 385 below.

² Mr. Eden had left London *en route* for Geneva on the afternoon of June 25 to preside over the Council of the League, which had been adjourned since May 13. He met M. Blum and M. Delbos in Paris at a dinner given by Sir G. Clerk on the same evening, and afterwards continued his journey to Geneva. The Emperor of Ethiopia also left London for Geneva on June 25. The Council met in private session at 5 p.m. on June 26. On Mr. Eden's suggestion it limited itself to noting that the Italo-Ethiopian dispute was to be considered by the Assembly on June 30.

³ Signor Bova Scoppa.

deliver to me in my capacity as President of the Council a letter from Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs stating that in view of the situation still prevailing it would be impossible for Italian delegation to take part in the Session of Council which opens today.

Italian representative took occasion to press me with questions as to probability of the course of events at the Assembly and attitude of His Majesty's Government in regard to recognition of Italian annexation of Abyssinia.

As regards the first I disclaimed any competence to forecast the views that members of the League might take and as regards the second referred him to what I had said in the House of Commons.⁴

Repeated to Rome.

⁴ See No. 373, note 2.

No. 384

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received June 30)

No. 729 [R 3790/226/22]

ROME, June 26, 1936

Sir,

I returned this morning the formal call of the new Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs¹ and had a conversation with him at the Palazzo Chigi which lasted about three quarters of an hour. Although nothing of any great importance emerged from this interview, I have the honour to report it briefly as an indication of the direction in which Italian official minds are now working.

2. Signor Bastianini turned at once to the European situation and stressed the strong desire—stronger, he said, than ever before—of the Head of the Government to resume full collaboration in European affairs. The wish was the greater at the present moment since Italy was now for the first time in a position to make full and generous contributions to European problems without any reserves. She was now a satisfied Power and would be able, therefore, to speak without any *arrière pensée*. Previously, as I would be aware, when settlements were to be reached she had always hesitated and made conditions; she would do so no longer. The Under Secretary then expressed the hope that cordial relations would be resumed before long between our two countries. So far as he could see no question divided England and Italy. The traditional Anglo-Italian friendship had sunk deep into Italian minds and though recent events might temporarily have disturbed the course of our relationship, the basis of a traditional friendship remained.

3. I thought it well to interpose here that while I hoped that ultimately

¹ Cf. No. 359, note 1.

the old friendship could be resumed, we must exercise patience and not expect anything too quickly. He must remember that feelings in England had been profoundly stirred over the Abyssinian question and though my countrymen might well forgive in the end they must not be expected to forgive too quickly.

4. Signor Bastianini then laid great stress on the desirability of accepting assurances when they were offered; after all, he said, the whole of life was based on confidence. (I refrained, with great difficulty, from making the obvious retort; to have done so would, I think, have served no useful purpose, particularly at a first interview.) If confidence, His Excellency went on, is absent in international affairs, then there can only be chaos. England and Italy had followed much the same line in regard to the ex-enemy States. It was impossible that there should be two categories of States in Europe; a people could not be kept in subjection indefinitely. From what he said it was clear that he had in mind conceptions based on the four-Power Pact.

5. The Under Secretary then spoke of the Mediterranean, where, in his view, no divergent interests existed as between our two countries. Italy had to live in that area and therefore the protection of her interests was a vital necessity to her; but His Majesty's Government also had important interests in the Mediterranean, particularly those of passage. There was, however, in Signor Bastianini's opinion, no clash between the interests of the two countries.

6. Turning to prospects at Geneva, the Under Secretary seemed rather disturbed at the possible effects of the Argentine motion before the Assembly.² When I pointed out that if, as I understood to be the case, Italy did not expect early recognition of the annexation, the course of events at Geneva might, in my opinion, go fairly smoothly, His Excellency replied that Italy had not even requested such recognition and certainly, therefore, did not expect it immediately. He then laid great stress on the benefits which the Italian occupation would bring to the natives of Abyssinia, who really in many parts of the country were treated worse than animals. He observed that Italy could never have had the success she had in such a short time if Abyssinia had in fact been united. The hatred of certain tribes, such as the Galla, for the Amharic domination was so great that it had much facilitated the Italian task. He hoped that this and similar points would be set out in detail in the communication which the Italian Government intended to address to the President of the Assembly.³

I have, etc.,
ERIC DRUMMOND

² See No. 382.

³ Comments by Sir R. Vansittart on his despatch included the following. 'We shall have to consider this very carefully. Sir E. Drummond took the same cautious line as I did with Signor Grandi [cf. No. 372]. We shall soon however be sitting with the Italians round the Locarno council-table. That will probably lead to other inevitable collaborations. We cannot of course rush into any Italian embraces; but we shall have to make up our minds not to rebuff Italy out of pique . . . R. V. July 6.'

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 27, 11 a.m.)

No. 65 L.N. Telegraphic [R 3752/294/67]

GENEVA, June 27, 1936, 9 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Monsieur Pouritch asked to see me this morning¹ when he stated that he had been in Belgrade where he had seen Prince Regent and on his instructions he had a number of questions which he would wish to put to me.

First, could I tell him what, if anything, lay behind our declaration that we would continue to fulfil our obligations under paragraph 3 of Article XVI should the need arise during period of uncertainty which must necessarily follow raising of sanctions.² Did His Majesty's Government regard this as a preliminary to negotiation of some form of Mediterranean Pact [?]. I replied that the declaration meant no more than it said. It was an attempt to show that we did not intend to leave our friends in the lurch should any unpleasant consequences follow upon action which they had taken in the present dispute. I admitted the extreme improbability of an eventuality arising which would call for action. Personally I had never been convinced of the likelihood of a 'mad-dog' act at any time during this dispute but now that sanctions were to be raised the likelihood was still less. None the less His Majesty's Government thought that it was only right that they should make the Malta declaration to show their interest in Mediterranean and in the immediate future of those who had co-operated with them in an anxious period.

Monsieur Pouritch thanked me for my statement and added that Yugoslav government were grateful for the declaration which had been made. This brought him to his second question.

Did we mean to remain in the Mediterranean or was there any truth in the many rumours current that we were considering a more or less total withdrawal from that Sea. I replied that certainly we intended to remain and that one of the purposes of our declaration had been to make this clear. Moreover Monsieur Pouritch would have noticed in the same speech that I had stated that His Majesty's Government intended to maintain forces in the Mediterranean in future which would be in excess of those which were at our disposal in that sea when this dispute had broken out. Also in this connexion I invited Monsieur Pouritch's attention to the declaration of the first Lord of the Admiralty that we had no intention of abandoning Malta.³

¹ This telegram was drafted on June 26; cf. No. 383, note 1.

² See No. 373, note 2.

³ Sir S. Hoare, who had re-entered the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty on June 5, 1936, stated in the House of Commons on June 17 in answer to a question that His Majesty's Government had no intention of abandoning Malta: 313 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 973. A report of this declaration, together with a report of a speech by Mr. W. Ormsby-Gore, Secretary of State for the Colonies since May 28, 1936, on the same lines, was transmitted to all the Mediterranean posts in a Foreign Office telegram of June 25.

Monsieur Pouritch said that answer I had given him was one he had expected but he was sure none the less that it would be a considerable relief to the Prince Regent and to the Yugoslav government.

Monsieur Pouritch said that he now came to his third question which was one he thought I should not be able to answer. If Yugoslavia were to be attacked say either by Germany or Italy would Great Britain come to her help. Although he thought that this was a question which we could not in fact answer yet he wished to put it in order to show present difficulty in position of Yugoslavia and of other nations in Central Europe. It was all very well of course to say as the French said in their new proposal for the reform of the League⁴ that if there were regional agreements then those outside the regional agreements could come to the help of those actually fighting by means of economic sanctions. Yugoslavia had got such regional agreements with Little Entente and with Balkan Entente but it was no use pretending that the military unity of these small nations was likely to suffice against a Great Power. It might suffice against Italy but it certainly could not suffice against Germany. Was the position then to be that Central Europe was to be abandoned to become a German sphere of influence? It was difficult to get any statement out of the French except that they wished to act closely with us. I replied that I did not quite see how the French could answer in such terms because the French had defined engagements towards several countries in Central and Eastern Europe—towards Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia in their new Franco-Soviet Pact. We had no such engagements. Our commitments in Europe were limited to Locarno and the Covenant. These we should certainly deem best to fulfil but we had no others. Nor so far as I was at present aware had we any intention of adding to these commitments.

Monsieur Pouritch indicated however that he was not over confident of the willingness of the French actually to take action on behalf of their allies in Central Europe. In this connexion he stated that he wished to give me an example. There was the danger of a Hapsburg restoration. It was difficult to assess how imminent that danger was. It was quite possible that Signor Mussolini was toying with that idea and that the Austrian government might also favour it. If so one thing could definitely stop it; that England and France jointly should make it plain that they would not stand for a Hapsburg

⁴ Statements were made by MM. Delbos and Blum in the French Senate on June 23 on European relations, including the reform of the League of Nations Covenant: see *The Times*, June 24, p. 15. *The Times* also printed on June 9, p. 13, a memorandum by the Chilean Government setting out its proposals for the reform of the Covenant. At the meeting of the Council on June 26 the Chilean delegate, M. Rivas Vicuña, asked for the discussion of the problem of League reform that day, and possibly at the next meeting of the Assembly. After a discussion the President, Mr. Eden, proposed that the matter should be discussed at the next meeting of the Assembly: *L/N.O.J.*, July–December 1936, pp. 751–6. The Assembly recommended on July 4 that Members should be invited to submit proposals for improving ‘the application of the principles of the Covenant’ before September 1, 1936, with a view to discussion at the next meeting of the Assembly. *L/N.O.J.*, *S.S. No. 151*, pp. 65–6; cf. No. 395, note 5, below.

restoration. If this were not done some dangerous developments were possible. If there were a Hapsburg restoration the Little Entente was pledged to mobilise and would do so. They would also no doubt close their frontiers to Austria and withdraw their Ministers. Then what was to happen if Signor Mussolini were to retort that Austria was his particular interest and that he would not allow her to be touched. In those circumstances Germany would probably remain quiet but what would France do? Would she support the Little Entente as her engagements . . .⁵ she should do? If so then Monsieur Pouritch thought there was a great deal to be said for France making this approach in Rome in advance. It would be all the better if England could associate herself with this action.

I gave Monsieur Pouritch no encouragement to think that we should do anything of the kind and he admitted that there was no Covenant obligation upon us to do so. He emphasized however the confusion that might arise in Central Europe. It was even conceivable that Germany might in the circumstances which he had outlined support the Little Entente against Italy. Then what was France going to do? She would be in a position of great embarrassment because she could hardly complain of Germany supporting her own friends.

In all the circumstances Monsieur Pouritch's general plea was that France in particular and His Majesty's Government and France together if possible, should make plain their attitude towards a Hapsburg restoration and towards Central Europe and Mediterranean problems in general. Summary of passages above relating to Hapsburg restoration has been telegraphed to Vienna direct for their observations.

Repeated to Belgrade and Paris.

⁵ The text was here uncertain.

No. 386

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received June 29, 12.20 p.m.)

No. 167 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4687/4/18]

BERLIN, June 27, 1936

My telegram No. 202.¹

His Majesty's Consul General Munich learns that Herr von Ribbentrop addressed an assembly of party officials in Munich city hall on June 25th and stated that in the international field of politics Germany's position had been seldom so strong. He also asserted that no reply would be given to the British questionnaire, at least not in its present form. It could not be accepted that Germany had attained her equality of status, [?when] she was still denied administration of her own colonies.²

¹ Of June 27, not printed. It gave a quotation from the speech mentioned in the next paragraph.

² Mr. C. J. W. Torr minuted (June 30) that the last sentence of the speech 'is itself an

answer to all our questions, an answer in the negative'. Mr. Wigram wrote that he was none too convinced that an Italo-German agreement of some kind was impossible. Sir R. Vansittart commented: 'Of course an Italo-German agreement is possible, & we shall create it if we are not careful. I wish people in this country wd realise this simple but pregnant fact, which becomes more pregnant if they wd also realise how often & how easily Germany has already altered her scale of priorities—including colonies. R. V. July 1.' Mr. Eden wrote, apparently on July 8: 'I am not convinced of this Italo-German rapprochement, for I believe that Italy will be very weak six months hence & that Hitler knows it.'

No. 387

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 28, 3.10 p.m.)

No. 73 Telegraphic [J 5780/84/1]

GENEVA, June 28, 1936, 1.40 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

I had a conversation with Monsieur Litvinov today¹ when we spoke of Italo-Abyssinia dispute in respect of which Monsieur Litvinov showed a keen desire to bring the matter to a conclusion as rapidly as possible. He was even willing to . . .² recognising Italy's conquest of Abyssinia at this session of the Assembly. To this however I demurred pointing out incidentally that Italy did not yet control much more than half of the country and though there was not any organised Abyssinian Government it did not seem to me reasonable to ask the League to give recognition at this time.

Monsieur Litvinov however clearly took the view that the Emperor's departure which he regarded as a mistake, from his point of view, had put an end to local resistance which [?while] admitting that Italians were likely to suffer difficulties in local fighting and grave financial embarrassments.

Monsieur Litvinov told me that he had been in communication with Signor Mussolini in an attempt to induce him to make some statement to the League in return for the raising of sanctions and hinted that our premature statement in London had rather cut across his efforts.³

I replied that I did not think that it would have been possible to attempt to bargain for the raising of sanctions against some declaration to the League by Signor Mussolini. If such a statement was to be made at all it was far better that it should be made spontaneously.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ This telegram was drafted on June 27.

² The text was here uncertain.

³ Presumably a reference to Mr. Eden's speech of June 18: cf. No. 373, note 2.

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 28, 8 p.m.)

No. 75 L.N. Telegraphic [C 4652/4/18]

GENEVA, June 28, 1936, 6.7 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

During the course of a conversation with M. Litvinov today,¹ he expressed himself as much pleased with the improvement in Anglo-French relations, which on my telling him that I had had from time to time the impression that the Soviet Government were not particularly keen to see good relations between Western peoples he maintained that he had always desired . . .² What made him apprehensive was any attempt to secure a Western European arrangement at the expense of the East.

I replied that both in the Prime Minister's speech and in my own³ we had made it clear that this was not our objective. What we required was a European settlement. This did not however prevent us from hoping and working for an arrangement among the Nationals [*sic*] of Western Europe just as he was working for an arrangement between the Powers of Eastern Europe, both such arrangements to be expressions of the Covenant. To this definition of policy M. Litvinov assented.

He went on to speak of the relations between Germany and Italy. M. Litvinov said that he did not believe there had been any real rapprochement between these two countries. Certain attempts were however being made to create evidence of such a tendency in order to arouse apprehension elsewhere. Fundamentally he was confident, the nature of the two peoples made any real understanding between Germany and Italy very difficult to consummate. In the past he had once endeavoured himself when his relations with Germany were good, and his relations with France were bad, to bring about a rapprochement between the Soviet, Germany and Italy. He had then appreciated, therefore, the difficulty there was in bringing these two nations together.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ i.e. June 27; cf. No. 387.

² The text was here uncertain.

³ Cf. Nos. 373, note 2, and 375, note 2.

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 28, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 77 L.N. Telegraphic [R 3757/294/67]

GENEVA, June 28, 1936, 7.20 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

In the course of a conversation today¹ Turkish Minister raised a number

¹ This telegram was drafted on June 27.

of matters connected with Italo-Abyssinian dispute. As he had apparently heard a number of wild stories about what had passed between Signor Grandi and myself² I told him briefly of assurances which Signor Mussolini had given and my suggestion that Italian Government might address these to the League.

He then enquired as to direction of our Mediterranean policy. I said that statement I had made in the House of Commons³ was intended to indicate that with the raising of sanctions we should not disinterest ourselves in the situation of those Powers in the Mediterranean who had collaborated with us while Article 16 was being applied. He would have noted that we intended to maintain stronger forces in the Mediterranean than before the Italo-Abyssinian conflict arose.

Monsieur Aras said he was very glad to hear this. He himself never believed the rumours that His Majesty's Government were going to abandon the Mediterranean. Security of the Mediterranean and security of the road by the Cape seemed to him to be part of the same problem.

He enquired whether assurances we were giving to the three Mediterranean Powers were to be identical with those which we had given before the aggression of Italy. I said that this was so.

He asked whether they were being given to France also. I said that procedure in regard to France had been rather different as France had not asked for similar assurances from us. If however the French desire to have them which I did not anticipate we should be ready to consider this.

Monsieur Aras enquired whether we had any definite views about the conclusion of a general Mediterranean pact. I said that we had not yet considered this nor was there any need to hurry about it. We were not yet ready to enter into any general negotiations with Italy. He asked what our attitude would be if the initiative for such a pact came from Italy. I replied that we should have to be careful to consider the matter in consultation with Turkey and the other interested Powers. This reply seemed to please Monsieur Aras.

Repeated to Angora.

² Cf. No. 372.

³ See No. 373, note 2.

No. 390

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 30, 10.30 a.m.)

No. 82 Telegraphic [J 5831/84/1]

GENEVA, June 30, 1936, 8.20 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Signor Bova Scoppa permanent Italian representative at Geneva asked to see me this afternoon¹ when he again enquired whether I had information

¹ This telegram was drafted on June 29.

to give him as to outcome of my conversations with other Delegations on the course to be pursued by the Assembly. I replied that this was a matter for the Assembly itself and indicated with as much politeness as I could command that I was not prepared to discuss the question with him.

2. Signor Bova Scoppa then went on to speak of [?situation] which would be created by Italian Delegation's memorandum which Italian Government was going to present to the Assembly. I replied that I had heard much of this memorandum from the diverse visitors who had been to see me today but since I had not seen it I had no idea of what its constructive value might be. Signor Bova Scoppa hastily interposed to say that the object of his visit was to show me this document, which he maintained that he had shown to no one except M. Delbos this morning. The document which is [?4] pages printed in quarto consists for the most part of a justification of Italian action in this dispute and closes with certain somewhat indefinite sentiments which Signor Bova Scoppa maintained embodied assurances from Italian Government. These related to recruitment of natives for the army, the maintenance of the 'open door', the transmission of reports to the League upon 'benefits conferred by Italian administration in Abyssinia' and Italy's future relations with the League. Document also contains a paragraph with reference to reform of the League which indicates that Italy has no preconceived ideas of her own on the subject other than that she maintains that the League should be reformed.

Signor Bova Scoppa asked me for my impressions of this document. Did I think it would contribute to ease the situation? And, though Signor Bova Scoppa did not add this, I gathered that he entertained the hope that it would facilitate ultimate recognition of Italy's conquest. I replied that I could hardly express a view on the document until I had studied it and that I was not prepared to pronounce upon it at this stage, Signor Bova Scoppa having explained that he could not leave the document with me as it was the only copy he had. My first impression however was one of some disappointment. Assurance to which Signor Bova Scoppa had drawn my attention seemed to me to be of a very vague character. For instance phrase about the black troops was capable of many interpretations. Signor Bova Scoppa here interposed to say that this was only a first statement of Italian position and that in diplomatic negotiations hereafter it would be quite possible, if it were desired, to secure agreement upon a more precise undertaking.

Finally Italian representative emphasised keen desire of his Government to co-operate wholeheartedly with the League and this he maintained was the reason which had actuated it in submitting this memorandum.²

Repeated to Rome.

². This document, in the form of a letter dated June 29 from Count Ciano to the President of the Assembly, was presented to the Assembly at its meeting on June 30, and is printed in *L.N.O.J.*, S.S. No. 151, pp. 19-21, with appendices on pp. 98-105 of the same volume.

*Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople)¹ to Foreign Office
(Received June 30, 5.30 p.m.)*

No. 41 Telegraphic [R 3823/294/67]

CONSTANTINOPLE, *June 30, 1936, 4.58 p.m.*

Addressed to Geneva No. 3, June 30th.

Following for Secretary of State.

Mr. Morgan's telegram No. 148 from Angora.²

Turkish Prime Minister³ being in Istanbul for twenty-four hours I paid him a visit of courtesy and discussed current events on a personal basis.

Following points of immediate interest emerged.

(1) He did not seem at all certain that determined straightforward and loyal attitude of Turkey, especially towards the United Kingdom, during Ethiopian crisis had been adequately appreciated in England.

I assured him that it had been fully and widely appreciated at home and that he need have no doubts on that subject. I think however that if you felt able to say something in a similar strain to Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs at Geneva that could be passed on to the Prime Minister it would be useful.

(2) Turkish Prime Minister while cordially welcoming the declaration that you made in House of Commons, June 18th (see your telegram to Belgrade No. 60)⁴ pointed out that in two respects he would have wished it more explicit: (a) . . . ⁵ 'period of uncertainty'; (b) that assurances exchanged last December⁶ would be operative 'only so long as in the opinion of the governments they remain appropriate to circumstances'. His point was that whereas assurances were reciprocal the wording of your declaration leaves His Majesty's Government the sole arbiter of the moment at which they lapse.

I told His Excellency that I was perfectly confident that there was no trap in the wording and that your clear intention was that so far as His Majesty's Government were concerned no Power which had exchanged united assurances with us should be victimised for action taken under Article 16 of the Covenant.

You will probably agree that there is good sense in his contention that Turkey as a party to the assurances should be consulted about the moment and circumstances in which they are to lapse. Here again I suggest that should you feel so disposed the matter could be most conveniently and conclusively

¹ Although Angora was the official Turkish capital, Sir P. Loraine preferred to divide his time between that city and Istanbul, to which he always referred by its old name.

² In this telegram of June 21 Mr. Morgan, Counsellor in H.M. Embassy at Angora, reported that he had informed the Acting Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mr. Eden's declaration of June 18; cf. No. 373, note 2.

³ Ismet Pasha. ⁴ Of June 19, not printed.

⁵ The text was here uncertain.

⁶ Cf. Volume XV, Nos. 298 and 339.

cleared up between you yourself and Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs at Geneva.

(3) Prime Minister's lurking fear is of course that Turkey may find herself isolated and left out of account should there come about a general Mediterranean settlement comprising all interested Great Powers. I am certain in my own head that no such idea has ever crossed your mind. He would probably be satisfied with an assurance that in the event of a general Mediterranean settlement becoming a practical consideration, His Majesty's Government would certainly wish to be satisfied before becoming a party to it that it took Turkish interests and national security into account in a manner satisfactory to Turkish Government themselves.

I of course made no suggestion whatever to Prime Minister in this or any similar sense. I should be glad however to learn your views on the subject of his apprehension.

I made use of the opportunity to emphasize to His Excellency our determination not only to give away nothing of our position in the Mediterranean but actually to reinforce it.

No. 392

Memorandum by Mr. S. D. Waley on Germany's Expenditure on Armaments

[C 4960/97/18]

TREASURY, June 30, 1936

I understand that Mr. Churchill proposes to raise this question on the third reading of the Finance Bill¹ on Friday.² The German Government no longer publish figures of their expenditure so that any estimate of their expenditure on armaments must be conjectural.

(1) *Mr. Churchill's estimate*

Mr. Churchill's estimate is £1,500 million for the three years of Hitler's regime and £800 million for the year 1935 only. Sir Henry Strakosch³ told me that he had supplied Mr. Churchill with these estimates. They are based on such factors as the increase in German revenue from taxation, the expenditure in Germany on capital account, and the increase in Germany's national income. Dr. Schacht told Mr. Pinsent recently that the figures used by Mr. Churchill were remarkably accurate and only slightly exaggerated.

¹ Mr. Churchill did not do so. He had, however, in the budget debate on April 23, 1936 (311 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 338 and 339) estimated German armament expenditure since 1933 at 20,000,000,000 Reichsmarks, with £800,000,000 expenditure for 1935 alone.

² i.e. July 3.

³ A director of various South African and other companies and a member of the Financial Committee of the League of Nations since 1920. The figures supplied by Sir H. Strakosch were criticized by Major Desmond Morton, head of the C.I.D.'s Industrial Intelligence Centre, who also supplied information on rearmament to Mr. Churchill. See Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill* (London, 1976), vol. v, pp. 726-9.

(2) *The 'Morning Post's' estimate*

1935 Current expenditure—£240 million

Capital expenditure—£400 million to £500 million

1936 Current expenditure—£400 million to £500 million

Capital expenditure—£400 million to £500 million

Total for 1935—£640 million to £740 million

Total for 1936—£800 million to £1,000 million

Total expenditure on armaments since Hitler came into power—£1,600 million.

(3) *Mr. Pinsent's estimate*

1935 Current expenditure—£250 million

Capital expenditure—£400 million to £500 million

1936 Current expenditure—£400 million to £500 million

Capital expenditure—£400 million to £500 million

It will be seen that there is a very close resemblance between the three estimates. But Mr. Pinsent, who is in a better position to ascertain the facts than most people, bases his estimate largely on conjecture. For example he says that the figure of £250 million for current expenditure in 1935 'is a sheer guess; but acquaintances of mine both German and foreign have made guesses of about the same order of magnitude'. As regards the current expenditure for 1936 Mr. Pinsent says 'I have been told by a German friend who is usually well informed that the strictly ordinary expenses of the Budget will rise from £640 million in 1935 to £1,080 million in 1936. These figures I find almost beyond belief; but it might well be the case that the ordinary expenditure of the Armed Forces might rise from £250 million in 1935 to £400 million or even £500 million in 1936'. As regards capital expenditure in 1935, Mr. Pinsent says 'It seems probable that an additional £400 million to £500 million must have been borrowed for the purpose of capital expenditure on armaments' and also says 'There is every reason to expect that in 1936 the capital expenditure of the Forces as a whole will be at least as high as in 1935'.

It is of course difficult to draw any sharp line between expenditure on armaments and expenditure on unemployment which takes the form of building roads required for strategic purposes and similar work. The current expenditure on armaments is met out of revenue, which is estimated to have increased from £470 million in 1933 to £700 million in 1935 (taking 12½ RM. = £1 in both cases).⁴ The capital expenditure is financed largely by means of Treasury bills which are held by special financial institutions created for the purpose.

The methods in which armament expenditure has been financed in Germany are extremely skilful, but it is clear that the process is not one which can be continued indefinitely. Germany has in fact been living on

⁴ In a minute of July 1 Mr. Sargent remarked that conversion at the arbitrary rate of 12½ marks to the £ gave a fictitiously high value to the mark 'which may be very misleading when British and German expenditure is compared'.

her capital, since a considerable part of the national production which ought to have gone to the capital expenditure required to keep machinery in good working order and similar purposes has been expended on armaments. Moreover as soon as armament expenditure is slowed down, Germany will be faced with a formidable unemployment problem.

No. 393

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received July 1, 3.10 a.m.)

No. 89 Telegraphic [C 4721/4/18]

Immediate

GENEVA, July 1, 1936, 2 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Lord Stanhope and I dined this evening¹ with Monsieur Blum, Monsieur Delbos, Monsieur van Zeeland and new Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Monsieur Spaak [Spaak]. In the course of conversation which covered whole range of Italo-Abyssinian dispute and (? general) European situation, Monsieur van Zeeland and French Minister pressed strongly for a meeting of Locarno Powers in the near future. Belgian Prime Minister emphasised that in his mind purpose of that meeting would not be a negative one. It was his desire that Powers there represented, which he hoped would include Italy, would make a joint approach to Germany which would offer Herr Hitler a new chance of co-operation which, in Monsieur van Zeeland's view, he thought it ten to one latter would accept. If however Herr Hitler were to refuse, then situation would be to that extent clarified. Monsieur Blum associated himself with Monsieur van Zeeland's point of view.

It will be appreciated that Monsieur van Zeeland's suggestion gives new purpose to a meeting of Locarno Powers. Hitherto I have felt no enthusiasm for such a meeting because I anticipated that we should there be called upon to take note of breakdown of conciliation and to admit that letter agreed upon in London on March 19th² would come into force. There seems however to be considerable advantage from many points of view in a meeting such as Monsieur van Zeeland suggests. If German Government has replied before meeting takes place then that reply can be basis of our deliberations.

If they have not replied, then joint approach will be the more certain fulfilment of Monsieur van Zeeland's own purpose of placing Germany on defensive. Main burden of his remarks tonight was that events, some of them extraneous to European affairs, had allowed Germany to escape from consequences of her own action. He desired to negotiate with Germany as an equal, which comment Monsieur Blum warmly seconded. French Prime Minister declared that he wanted a European arrangement with or without Germany, preferably with.

Both French and Belgian Ministers expressed a desire for a meeting of Locarno Powers in Brussels next week. This I said was physically impossible

¹ i.e. June 30. For an account of this conversation by M. Spaak see *D.D.B., op. cit.*, No. 86.

² See No. 144.

and they somewhat reluctantly agreed that the projected date might be July 16th. I undertook to let Monsieur van Zeeland know if possible by tomorrow night the views of His Majesty's Government as to this meeting. The matter is all the more urgent since the French and Belgian Ministers are anxious to approach Italy and cannot do so until we have made clear whether we are prepared to attend a meeting on the date suggested.

In all circumstances I strongly recommend that we should accept.³

Repeated to Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Rome.

³ The Foreign Office view of this telegram was summarized by Mr. Sargent (July 1) who wrote that 'we shall have to choose between the two following courses: (1) Whether we will continue to insist upon nothing less than a general European settlement, and, since that is impossible, abandon all further attempt to come to terms with Germany ... which will ... lead us directly to an Anglo-French-Belgian defence alliance against Germany; or (2) Whether we will try and induce the French to compromise to the extent of negotiating an Anglo-French-German agreement—as suggested by the Prime Minister in his recent speech [cf. No. 375, note 2] for stabilising the position in the West, while tacitly abandoning any further attempt to control the situation in the East and South-East.' Sir R. Vansittart thought that the issues raised were 'colossal' and stressed the importance of their being understood by the Cabinet. The Cabinet considered the telegram at its meeting on July 1 and after an inconclusive debate decided that as the issues at stake were of such great importance it would be glad to discuss the matter personally with Mr. Eden before making a decision. On the evening of July 1 Lord Cranborne telephoned this message to Mr. Eden in Geneva.

No. 394

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received July 1, 8.10 p.m.)

No. 203 Telegraphic [C 4782/4/18]

BERLIN, July 1, 1936, 6.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 192 of June 15th.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs repeated to me this morning that he had given Chancellor draft of German reply a long time ago. His Excellency feels however that delay has not altogether been unfortunate owing to important events that have been taking place and that have affected general situation. Even now it would be difficult to reply definitely to all questions without knowing the views of His Majesty's Government on collective security for instance.

Baron von Neurath will spend a few days with the Chancellor in the South early next week and hopes to be able to extract reply from him then although he could not give me any promise as to actual date thereof.

I said I hoped that reply would be so worded as to enable negotiations to be begun (that was the earnest wish of His Majesty's Government) and that it would be directed towards the future rather than the past.

This Baron von Neurath assured me would be the case. In reply to a question he said he personally would favour round table conversations between

¹ No. 369.

all Locarno Powers including Italy. Without Italy he did not think they could be fruitful. This was another reason why delay had not been harmful for the situation in regard to Italy was getting clearer. He added that phase of written communications should in his opinion now cease.

Repeated to Geneva No. 12.

No. 395

Speech¹ by Mr. Eden at the Assembly of the League of Nations, July 1, 1936

[J 5941/84/1]

We listened yesterday² to an appeal by the Emperor of Abyssinia delivered with a dignity which must have evoked the sympathy of each one of us. Not one of us here present can contemplate with any measure of satisfaction the circumstances in which this Assembly meets. The occasion is painful for us all. It is the more necessary in the interests of every member of the League and of the League as an organisation that these facts should be squarely faced. So far as the application of sanctions in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute is concerned, the members of the League have in common applied certain economic and financial measures which they were in a position to impose and which they thought could be made effective by their own action alone. Yet we are all conscious that these measures have failed to fulfil the purpose for which they were imposed. It is not that the measures in themselves have been without effect, but that the conditions in which they were expected to operate have not been realised. The course of military events and the local situation in Abyssinia have brought us to a point at which the sanctions in force are incapable of reversing the order of events in that country.

The fact is unhappily fundamental. Had His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom any reason to believe that the maintenance of existing sanctions, or even the addition to them of other economic measures, would re-establish the position in Abyssinia, then for their part they would be prepared to advocate such a policy and, if other members of the League agreed, to join in its application. In view of the facts of the present situation in Abyssinia His Majesty's Government find it impossible to entertain any such

¹ Copy received in the Foreign Office on July 3.

² The sixteenth ordinary session of the League of Nations Assembly resumed its work (cf. No. 383, note 2) with its eighteenth plenary meeting on June 30 at 5 p.m., and met thereafter twice daily for the next four days. A full report of the proceedings is printed in *L/N.O.J.*, *S.S. No. 151*, pp. 17-71. At the opening meeting M. van Zeeland was elected president of the session, and after opening remarks read Count Ciano's letter (cf. No. 390, note 2) and then called on the Argentine delegate to address the Assembly. M. Cantilo stressed his country's opposition to the recognition of territorial changes which had not been obtained by peaceful means. The meeting concluded with an address by H.M. the Negus, Haile Selassie (*ibid.*, pp. 22-5). Mr. Eden made his speech at the twentieth meeting of the session on the afternoon of July 1.

belief. In our view, it is only military action that could now produce this result. I cannot believe that in present world conditions such military action could be considered a possibility. This is the situation with which we are confronted; the realities have to be recognised. In the light of them I can only repeat, and repeat with infinite regret, the opinion which I have already expressed on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that in existing conditions the continuation of the sanctions at present in force can serve no useful purpose. At the same time it is the view of His Majesty's Government that this Assembly should not in any way recognise Italy's conquest over Abyssinia. Moreover, if the harsh realities of the situation must determine our attitude towards the maintenance of the measures we have adopted, they cannot in our judgment involve any modification of the view expressed of Italy's action by fifty members of the League last autumn.

There is one matter of particular concern to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to which I wish at this point to refer. I may recall to the Assembly that on the 22nd January last His Majesty's Government presented to the Co-ordination Committee³ a memorandum regarding the results of the exchanges of views which had taken place between His Majesty's Government and certain other Governments in connexion with the application of article 16 of the Covenant.

In paragraph 10 of that memorandum it is stated that His Majesty's Government had given reciprocal assurances to certain Governments to the effect that they intended faithfully to apply all the obligations devolving upon them under the Covenant in consequence of the measures taken in application of article 16.

Should it be decided that the existing sanctions should no longer be continued, it is the view of His Majesty's Government that these assurances given by them should not end with the discontinuance of the sanctions, but should continue to cover the temporary period of uncertainty which might ensue. His Majesty's Government declare accordingly that they are prepared to stand by these assurances in the event of a situation arising which would have brought them into force were action under article 16 still continuing.

It will be appreciated that this declaration is made with the object of removing certain preoccupations which may exist in the present transitional period and it is intended to operate only so long as, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, it remains appropriate to the existing circumstances.

That is all I have to say for the moment about the immediate subject before us. There remains, however, the all-important subject of the League's future. Are we to say because we have failed on this occasion to make the rule of law prevail over the rule of force, that we are therefore finally to abandon this object? Certainly not. His Majesty's Government cannot accept such a view. How many efforts have been needed in history to realise objectives of far less significance to the ultimate destiny of the human race?

³ See Volume XV, No. 472.

With such an objective as this before us our endeavour must be centred upon the task of reconstruction.

I heard with the greatest interest, as I am sure we all did, those passages in the speech of the representative of France⁴ in which he spoke of the determination of his Government and of his country to seek to rebuild the authority of the League. In that all-important task I can assure him at once of the fullest co-operation of His Majesty's Government.

It is, however, clear that the lessons of the last few months must be embodied in our practice. Some people may say it is the men and not the machinery that have failed. We have to probe a little deeper than that. What were the reasons for the failure? Let us consider this matter for the moment for it is of vital importance to the future of the League. Was failure due to the fact that there are certain risks which nations are not prepared to run save where their own interests are more directly at stake than they were in this case? Clearly the ideal system of collective security is one in which all nations are prepared to go to all lengths—military lengths—to deal with any aggressor. If such an ideal cannot be at present attained—and I agree with M. Blum that a heavily-armed world greatly increases the difficulty of its attainment—it is surely our duty to amend not necessarily our rule of law, but the methods by which it is to be enforced, so that these may correspond to the action which nations are in fact ready and willing to take.

There is another consideration which it is idle to ignore. This dispute was not an isolated event in a world which had no other cause for anxiety. We, as members of a League which is not universal, are inevitably conscious in more or less degree of the existence of other anxieties.

As regards the immediate future of the Assembly's work, His Majesty's Government are ready to join at any time in any work which this Assembly, or any other organisation of the League, decides should be undertaken.

It may be that some preliminary exchanges of views on the subject of the League's future can usefully take place during the present session, but it is essential that all countries should have time and opportunity sufficient to consider in detail the problem that confronts them. There must, however, be no avoidable delay, and I suggest therefore that the time to get to grips with this problem should be at the Assembly in September.

If I have tried to indicate some of the lessons of recent months it is not because I believe that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom or the League of Nations need proffer any apology for having made an attempt which has no parallel in history. However deeply, however sincerely, we may deplore its outcome, we cannot regret, nor, I think, will history regret that the attempt was made.

It has been my privilege during the past few days as President of the Council to come into contact with a number of the delegations represented here to-day. I have been struck, and in this I share the opinion expressed by the President of the Assembly yesterday, by the unanimity of view which I believe exists amongst us. This unanimity applies to many of the problems

⁴ M. Blum spoke at the nineteenth meeting of the session on the morning of July 1.

that now confront us, but more especially is it expressed in a determination that the League must persist in its endeavours to fulfil its mission. So far as His Majesty's Government are concerned our policy has been based on the principles for which the League stands. We retain our faith in these principles.⁵

⁵ It was agreed at the twenty-third meeting of the Assembly on the morning of July 3 that the General Committee of the Assembly should draft a resolution embodying the Assembly's recommendation in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. The text so prepared was received by the delegates at the meeting at noon on July 4, and accepted at the twenty-sixth meeting that evening. It noted that 'various circumstances have prevented the full application of the Covenant of the League of Nations', proposed that members should send in proposals by September 1, 1936, for improving the application of the principles of the Covenant, and recommended that 'the Co-ordination Committee should make all necessary proposals to the Governments in order to bring to an end the measures taken by them in execution of Article 16 of the Covenant'. The text affirmed the principles of the Covenant which excluded the settlement of territorial questions by force. There were 44 out of 49 possible votes in favour of the recommendations; one vote—Ethiopia—against, and four abstentions. Two Ethiopian resolutions, providing in effect for a continuance of League support including a loan of £10,000,000, were lost on ballot, with 23 adverse votes and 25 abstentions.

No. 396

Letter from Lord Swinton to Mr. Eden

[C 5159/3928/18]

AIR MINISTRY, July 1, 1936

My dear Anthony,

I want to let you know at once the gist of a long conversation I had yesterday with General Milch.

I had not referred to General Valle's¹ visit to Berlin, but General Milch at once introduced the subject, and said that he wanted to tell me that there had been no significance whatever in this Italian visit. General Valle was in fact returning the visit which the German Air Staff had paid to Italy a year and a half earlier. He had been with General Milch all the time he was in Berlin, and General Milch had been present on the only occasion when General Valle met Hitler and Goering; and he could assure me that not only had no sort of political or military agreement been reached, but that there had been no such talk. The only business done was in the field of civil aviation, where they had made an agreement as regards three air lines operating between Germany and Italy.²

This gave me the opportunity of saying how easily rumours got about; and that plain statements of fact and intention were always the best way of countering such rumours. I had appreciated very much the facilities which had been extended to our Air Attaché, and which we had equally reciprocated towards General Wenninger; but that it would greatly simplify matters

¹ General Giuseppe Valle was Chief of the Italian aeronautical general staff.

² In a minute of July 8 commenting on Lord Swinton's letter Mr. Wigram said that the Foreign Office knew nothing to contradict these statements about General Valle.

if there could be a plain statement of intentions on both sides.³ It was our regular Parliamentary practice to state our programmes of squadrons and first-line strength a long time in advance; and he would have seen that I had made a full statement of our programme in Parliament; would it not be a wise and reasonable course for the German Air Ministry to do the same?

General Milch replied that he thought Group Captain Don had been supplied with the programme for the present year. I said I did not think this was so; and it transpired in the course of discussion on this that apparently what had happened was that Don had been given a number of facts about stations and establishments from which it was thought he would deduce the intentions as regards numbers of squadrons planned for the current year. I said this matter could obviously be cleared up, and that we could no doubt see that whatever information it was intended to give was given in a clear form.⁴

General Milch said that he could not go further than this as they had not in fact decided what their plans would be beyond the current year. This involved political questions.

General Milch then at once embarked on a long dissertation on Russia. This was the real menace. It was against Russia they were building, and not against us, and it was the Russian position which dominated the situation. Russia had the largest Air Force in the world—4,500 first-line machines. Their factories were being expanded and were situated near or beyond the Ural Mountains, where no one could get at them; and it was believed that they would soon be in a position to turn out 1,000 machines a month—a proposition which I treated with great scepticism.⁵ But it was not only the size of Russia—it was the association of Russia and Czecho-Slovakia. I said that we had been repeatedly assured that no such association in fact existed. General Milch replied that they had also been told this by the Czech Minister in Berlin, and the General thought that the Czech Minister might honestly believe this; but they, the Germans, had absolutely certain information of the facts. Russian officers were stationed on the Czech aerodromes. Skoda and other works were producing bombs of Russian specification. Spare parts for Russian machines were held at Czech aerodromes.⁶ I said that apart altogether from the truth of Czech representations, it surely was inconceivable that Czecho-Slovakia should be willing to make

³ Cf. Volume XV, No. 218.

⁴ In commenting on this part of the letter Mr. Wigram noted that in April 'the Germans were using the excuse of the Staff conversations to withhold information from our Air Attaché' but that towards the end of April 'the Air Ministry told us that things were not going so badly'.

⁵ Mr. Wigram commented: '... our Air Staff estimate of Germany's potential production is 750 aircraft a month three months after mobilisation. It seems improbable that Russia could do better.'

⁶ Mr. Wigram noted that there had been 'the most categorical denials from the Czecho-slovak Government' as to the existence of any sort of air understanding between Russia and Czechoslovakia; on the other hand 'we have very confidential reports from sources which are as near as possible guaranteed to be completely reliable that a very close though subterranean understanding does exist'. Cf. Nos. 85, 87, and 93.

herself the battle-ground for a Russian offensive against Germany. That would be fatal for the safety of a small country. No doubt fear existed, but probably if the Czechs were talking to me as the General was, they would say they were terrified of being attacked by Germany; and the fear complex was of course prevalent in Europe. But did the General really believe that anybody wanted to attack Germany? The General would have none of this. He said certainly the Russians did want to attack when the time was favourable.

I asked the General how he conceived a Russian invasion would take place. He said that it would not be by land at all; that what the Russians would do would be to bomb German towns continuously; that their own industrial areas were so far away that no one could retaliate upon them, and that in this way there would come discontent in Germany and hostility to the Government which might lead to a Communist outbreak.

It was in vain that I suggested that all this was very far-fetched, and that if people really entertained such fears surely the best way was to get down to frank talk between the nations. The General stoutly protested his conviction, which is either a genuine belief or an attitude which the Germans are determined to maintain.

Y[ou]rs ever
SWINTON

No. 397

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received July 2, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 90 Telegraphic [C 4784/4/18]

GENEVA, July 2, 1936, 8.5 a.m.

My telegram No. 89.¹

Following from Secretary of State.

I had a further conversation with Monsieur Blum this evening² on the subject of meeting of Locarno Powers.

I told French Prime Minister that I should prefer not to make any definite pronouncement on this subject for I should have an opportunity to consult my colleagues in London. There were certain difficulties in the situation one of which he would be familiar with—the question of Italy. Monsieur Blum replied that he fully appreciated our point of view and so far as Italy was concerned he said, speaking privately, he felt just as acutely as we did difficulty of sitting with Italy round a table at the present time. At the same time I had [?overlooked] that Italy had been present at all previous meetings of Locarno Powers since events of March 7th and if Italy were to accept invitation it was difficult to see how we could refuse. Personally, however, he would be in no way upset if Italy did not attend. What he desired above

¹ No. 393.

² i.e. July 1.

all was a meeting between ourselves France and Belgium and this had been many times postponed and he begged me most earnestly to do my utmost to agree in principle to such a meeting before Delegations left Geneva at the end of the week. It was of the utmost importance to French public opinion and he really did not think the request unreasonable.

In response to a suggestion of mine Monsieur Blum said that he was quite willing to leave both date and place of such a meeting unsettled. All he wished was that it should be agreed to in principle that a meeting of Locarno Powers should . . .³ as early as possible.

In all circumstances I cannot help feeling that Monsieur Blum's attitude is extremely reasonable. Seven weeks have elapsed since we last met at Geneva on which occasion we contemplated a meeting of Locarno Powers as soon as German reply had been received. The long delay which has occurred since then furnishes some justification for suggestion that a meeting should now in any event take place in the near future. If there is no question of fixing date or place I can myself see no difficulty in agreeing to this procedure and am indeed most anxious to do so, and I appreciate embarrassment which will be caused to the French and Belgian Ministers if they have to leave Geneva without that element of satisfaction for their respective (?public opinions). It has to be remembered that the French Government had asked some weeks ago for a meeting of Locarno Powers during present meeting of Assembly and that we refused this.⁴

I am dining alone with Monsieur van Zeeland tomorrow night when I shall have a further opportunity for a discussion upon suggested programme of work for Locarno Powers. In the meantime however I am most anxious to agree to Monsieur Blum's suggestion before I leave here, since I am confident that the knowledge that we are going to meet cannot but be salutary in Germany as well as helpful in Belgium and in France.

Repeated to Berlin, Brussels, Rome and Paris.

³ The text was here uncertain.

⁴ See No. 377, note 2.

No. 398

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 3, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 427 Telegraphic [C 4807/4/18]

ROME, July 2, 1936, 11.45 p.m.

Geneva telegrams Nos. 89¹ and 90.²

These telegrams raise question of an invitation to Italy to be present at an early meeting of the Locarno Powers. Manner in which this invitation is conveyed to Italian Government may be of some importance. On the assumption that sanctions are removed and that she is invited either (a) by the three Locarno Powers or (b) by the Power in whose capital or territory

¹ No. 393.

² No. 397.

meeting is to take place on behalf of the other two Powers then I believe Italy will accept. If on the other hand invitation is sent (c) in the name of France and Belgium alone Italy will probably enquire the attitude of His Majesty's Government and should this prove in her view to be one of reluctance to acquiesce, Italy's acceptance becomes at least problematical. If the attitude of His Majesty's Government were definitely opposed to the inclusion of Italy at the meeting and Italy were to realise this, then I believe she would refuse to accept.

2. Should she refuse I fear she will get off the fence and endeavour to reach political understanding with Germany.³ I do not know how Germany would react to such an advance and obviously this falls outside my competence but conditions in which some deal over Austria could be done provided independence of the latter were assured seem to be present.

Repeated to Geneva and Berlin.

³ Referring apparently to this sentence, Sir R. Vansittart commented on July 5: 'It receives confirmation from the activities of Countess Ciano [see Nos. 363 and 371, and 400 below] in Berlin, & from the anxieties expressed—or rather half uttered—by Signor Grandi in my last interview with him. The doubtful point is still how well or how far such overtures wd be received by Hitler. But he too is mercurial, & the danger—in very slightly altered circumstances—of his accepting one of Signor Mussolini's advances must therefore always be borne in mind . . .'

No. 399

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received July 3)

No. 164 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4806/4/18]

Very Confidential

BERLIN, July 2, 1936

When I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday morning neither he nor I had yet read the account of the debate in the House of Commons on Mr. Duff Cooper's Paris speech, of which, however, His Excellency had the translation of the Reuter version on his table.¹ He personally did not take the speech too tragically, but said that he had had a hard time with the

¹ Speaking in French on June 24 as the guest of honour at the annual dinner of the Association France-Grande Bretagne in Paris, Mr. Duff Cooper described Anglo-French friendship as one of necessity, a matter of life and death for both countries. The modern tendency, he said, to exalt war, to represent liberty as a false ideal, to glorify obedience, was detestable and full of peril. Not only their ideals but their frontiers were in mortal danger, and the future of civilization depended on the two great democracies of Western Europe. The course of the debate on the speech in the House of Commons on Monday, June 29, revealed that the draft of the speech had been approved by the Foreign Office. Opposition spokesmen, while not objecting to those passages which tended to cement French and British friendship, criticized the speech as a public pronouncement which conflicted with the government's foreign policy and with Great Britain's treaty obligations. Mr. A. Henderson (M.P. for Kingswinford since 1935 and son of the Rt. Hon. A. Henderson who died on October 20, 1935) contended that no one should do anything to close the door to a peacefully inclined Germany. See *The Times*, June 25, p. 15; 314 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 115-74.

Party, etc., and had only with difficulty succeeded in damping down the German press on the subject.

I hear—*very privately*—that the Chancellor has been worked up by certain Party leaders to a state of great annoyance with us. Not only was Mr. Duff Cooper's speech unwelcome, but the debate in the House was still more so. It emerged that the Foreign Office and Foreign Secretary had approved Mr. Duff Cooper's speech. Herr Hess, Dr. Goebbels and other Party leaders characterised the speech as worse than Mr. Lloyd George's Mansion House speech in 1912.² Party critics next pointed to the British attitude at Montreux as fresh proof of unfriendliness. Germany was not even invited to express her views on such an important question as the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Baltic.³ In addition, their information from Geneva was to the effect that England was responsible for summoning the League Commissioner from Danzig.⁴ Thus, they complained that, while France was behaving correctly, England was thwarting Germany at every turn. They attacked the Ribbentrop policy root and branch, and urged a policy of pure isolation.

I gather that Herr von Ribbentrop, whose health is none too good, was somewhat dismayed, particularly as the Chancellor spoke very irritably to him on the telephone yesterday and reversed his promise to answer our questions before the end of the week. Herr von Ribbentrop, who is now working very amicably with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, fears that Baron von Neurath may not be able to reverse Herr Hitler's decision when he visits the latter next week.

² July 21, 1911.

³ See Chapter VI below.

⁴ Mr. Eden was the League *rapporteur* on Danzig, and President of the current (ninety-second) session of the Council. Mr. Seán Lester, League of Nations High Commissioner for Danzig, had sent a letter dated June 30 to the Secretary-General giving details of recent difficulties of his position, including the refusal of the officers of the German cruiser *Leipzig*, which arrived in Danzig on June 25, to call on him. It appeared that this action had been taken by the officers on the instructions of their *Oberstebefehlshaber*. It had thus to be regarded as a move by the German Government to accentuate differences between the High Commissioner and the German majority, represented by the Gauleiter, Herr Forster. Both Mr. Lester and Herr Greiser, President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, were asked to appear before the Council meeting on July 4. Herr Greiser made two speeches, attacking the High Commissioner and the League regime generally in Danzig, and there followed the well-known incident in which he 'cocked a snook' at the press gallery. At a secret session following this meeting Mr. Eden said that it was impossible to send Mr. Lester back to Danzig without some specific undertaking for his safety. M. Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, undertook that Polish forces should go to Mr. Lester's assistance should they be needed. Lord Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, pp. 388-9; *L.J.N.O.J.*, July-December 1936, pp. 762-9, 895-9. There is a good contemporary account in the *Survey of International Affairs 1936* (London, 1937), pp. 539-74.

No. 400

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received July 4)

No. 166 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4847/4/18]

BERLIN, July 2, 1936

I hear very confidentially that Countess Ciano, towards the end of her visit here,¹ conveyed to Herr Hitler her father's wishes. These were briefly:

- (1) Non interference by Germany and Italy in Austria, in return for which Mussolini would grant a very liberal régime to the German-speaking South Tyrolese.
- (2) Neither Germany nor Italy should make any move in European affairs without informing the other beforehand.
- (3) Germany should reply to our questionnaire by stating that no decisions could be reached by Germany until actual raising of sanctions and recognition of Italian sovereignty over Abyssinia.

Herr Hitler was amiable, but evasive. He pointed out, however, that he had already intimated to His Majesty's Government that the German reply could not be given until Anglo-Italian relations were clarified. Countess Ciano, on behalf of her father, claimed that strict neutrality alone should prevent Germany from negotiating with Italy's enemies, but that her appeal was based on friendlier grounds, viz. from one Fascist State to another. She added as another argument that her father would support the claim of the expanding German nation to colonies, raw materials, etc. None of these arguments, however, drew any definite answer from the Führer.

¹ Cf. Nos. 371 and 398, note 3.

No. 401

Sir E. Phipps (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received July 3)

No. 677 [C 4825/4/18]

BERLIN, July 2, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to acquaint you that on his return from leave Mr. Newton informed me of the conversations which he had had a few days before leaving London with yourself and also with Lord Cranborne, when you had referred particularly to the delay in the German reply to the enquiries made in accordance with your despatch No. 541 of 6th May.¹ I requested him to seek an interview with Herr Dieckhoff, the substance of which is recorded in the attached memorandum. I myself have discussed the matter with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as reported in my telegram No. 203 of 1st July.²

I have, etc.,

ERIC PHIPPS

¹ No. 307.

² No. 394.

Memorandum by Mr. B. C. Newton

BERLIN, July 2, 1936

In accordance with your desire and at the first convenient opportunity since my return from leave I saw Herr Dieckhoff today, 1st July, and gave him certain impressions which I had obtained at home, in particular as regards our so-called questionnaire.

I said that a few days before my return I had seen the Secretary of State and also Lord Cranborne who had both enquired about the German attitude to our enquiries and asked when an answer might be expected. My personal impression had been that some mystification and in fact surprise were felt at the delay.

I told Herr Dieckhoff that I had tried to explain the German attitude according to my recollection of it when I had been in Germany a fortnight previously as follows. Firstly, there had been a feeling that the German Government were being asked to take a second step and commit themselves further before the other Powers had declared themselves at all. I said that the Secretary of State had immediately confirmed what I had told Herr Dieckhoff before, that this was not at all the way the enquiries were regarded in England; on the contrary our enquiries were a response to Herr Hitler's proposals and sought elucidation precisely in order that progress might be made. Herr Dieckhoff, however, evidently still thought there was some justification for the original German point of view.

I told Herr Dieckhoff, secondly[,] that I had mentioned the explanation for delay given by the Chancellor himself, namely that it would be useless, and perhaps worse than useless, to produce a German reply as a target for criticism until the French Government had declared their policy and were in a position to negotiate. Herr Dieckhoff said that while he himself had not thought that this need be a serious obstacle, both Herr von Neurath and the Chancellor had thought it important to await developments in France. I pointed out that in any case Monsieur Blum had now made his declaration of policy³ and seemed to be perfectly able to negotiate, with which Herr Dieckhoff agreed. Thirdly, I said I had explained that the publication of our enquiries had caused annoyance. I had found that the necessity of publication had also been much regretted at the Foreign Office and mentioned that the original leakage came largely from Germany. This latter fact seemed new to Herr Dieckhoff but he said that while publication had caused annoyance at the moment this was now altogether past.

Furthermore I pointed out to him that our enquiries were very carefully and politely worded in such a way as not to embarrass the German Government but to facilitate a reply. The Secretary of State had moreover in speaking to me emphasised that if the German Government would help him

³ Cf. No. 385, note 4; in his speech to the League Assembly on July 1 (see No. 395, note 2) he also spoke in favour of rebuilding the authority of the League; cf. *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 379, note 2.

with a useful and conciliatory reply it had been and remained his firm intention to do all in his power to promote a general settlement.

Herr Dieckhoff told me that despite various purely fortuitous causes of delay, such as the fact that Herr von Neurath and Herr Hitler had not happened to be in the same place at the same time, the German reply had been pretty well ready within a fortnight or so. By that time, however, various fundamental questions seemed to have become very fluid and the attitude of the governments concerned, including His Majesty's Government, to be uncertain, e.g. as regards reform of the League of Nations, collective security, sanctions, and Anglo-Italian relations. It had therefore been thought better to wait and the British position was not authoritatively stated before the debates in the House of Commons on the 18th⁴ and 23rd June⁵ and the French attitude was not declared until the 24th June. By then the meeting of the League of Nations was immediately impending.

There had, however, Herr Dieckhoff assured me, been no change in the fundamental attitude of the German Government. Any suggestions that Germany was considering the possibility of some new grouping were entirely beside the point. In particular too much importance should not be attached to the recent visit of Countess Ciano⁶ while as regards the visit of the Air-General Valle, it might be observed that the German Air-General Milch was at the present moment equally visiting England.⁷ In Germany good relations between England and Italy were desired and Herr Dieckhoff could only believe that Signor Mussolini would himself now be anxious to restore them as soon as possible.

Finally I pointed out that the policy of better relations with England could best be promoted by a helpful reply to our questions. On the other hand undue delay was mystifying and discouraging to His Majesty's Government and might irritate a public opinion which was otherwise disposed to be friendly.

So far as Herr Dieckhoff himself is concerned, I am sure he will do his best to expedite a reply. He said that no decision in the matter had, however, yet been taken and he did not suppose that a reply would be made at any rate until after the League of Nations meeting.

⁴ See No. 373, note 2.

⁵ See No. 375, note 4.

⁶ Cf. Nos. 371 and 400.

⁷ See No. 396.

No. 402

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received July 3, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 92 L.N. Telegraphic [J 5944/4044/1]

GENEVA, July 3, 1936, 2 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

I have decided not to communicate to members of the League telegram

from Galla chiefs of Western Abyssinia asking for British mandate (Gambeila telegram unnumbered of June 12th).¹

Erskine should be instructed to inform them of this decision and to explain on behalf of His Majesty's Government that as His Majesty's Government are not disposed to assume mandate it is felt that no useful purpose would be served by forwarding Galla appeal. Moreover such action since nothing constructive could result from it might in fact prove detrimental to Gallas themselves.

¹ Not preserved in the Foreign Office archives: cf. No. 367. Mr. Peterson commented on June 11: 'I do not myself see why we should take any notice of these people who, having betrayed the Ethiopians at Amba Alagi and looted Dessie, are now trying to shuffle out of the consequences of their action—submission to the Italians.' Mr. Eden agreed (June 17) to Sir R. Vansittart's preference for ignoring the application, but on July 2 Mr. Strang telephoned from Geneva that Mr. Eden now felt 'great difficulty in withholding a message of this kind from the League'. Mr. Eden was reminded of his previous decision, and told that in the Foreign Office view the passing of the message to the League would entail Anglo-Italian friction and endanger the signatories of the message.

No. 403

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received July 3, 3.20 a.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic [C 4804/4/18]

Immediate

GENEVA, July 3, 1936, 2.50 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

I had a long conversation with Monsieur van Zeeland tonight¹ during which he developed further his ideas about Locarno meeting which he is anxious should be held as early as possible.² In his view it is essential to make a supreme attempt now to get to negotiations with Germany. This is psychological moment. In France the Blum Government is prepared to go further to meet Germany than any of its predecessors. Moreover extent of its internal difficulties make it all the more anxious for success in foreign sphere. Raising of sanctions and evidence of Anglo-French friendship more especially if this can be decided in next few days, are having their effect on Germany and she is not altogether easy in her isolation. Whether Germany replies to our questions or not is of less importance than that Locarno Powers should meet soon and make an attempt which would either succeed in bringing Germany into negotiations or show to the world that nothing was to be hoped for from German collaboration. These were Monsieur van Zeeland's arguments and he showed himself convinced that if we were bold enough and skilful enough in the approach we made to Germany she would scarcely find it possible to resist.

2. I asked Monsieur van Zeeland to explain to me a little further what was the kind of offer that he suggested we should make to Germany. 'Let's

¹ i.e. July 2.

² Cf. No. 393.

get back' Monsieur van Zeeland replied 'to London negotiations of last March.' I pointed out to him however that in this connexion there were certain elements scarcely likely to be palatable to Germany. For instance there was refortification of (?) Rhineland zone. Monsieur van Zeeland replied with vigour that it was no good considering such matters now. Germany would not give an undertaking about refortification and it was useless to ask for it. Our objections [?objectives] should be at once simpler and bolder. We should ask Germany two things: firstly to come to a meeting of Locarno Powers to negotiate a new Locarno on a basis of complete equality . . .³ secondly to return to the League. To these two questions, asked without trimmings or conditions, Germany would be greatly embarrassed to reply 'no'. I asked Monsieur van Zeeland how he thought French Government would look upon such a policy. His reply showed that he had some confidence that they would fall in with it. Time however might be short. Nobody could say how long Monsieur Blum's Government would last. It had to be remembered that Monsieur Litvinov was not friendly to it. The latter would prefer a Herriot administration which would be at once more friendly to Russia and less friendly to Germany. The essential however was to give French some satisfaction between now and the meeting of Locarno Powers. I asked Monsieur van Zeeland what that satisfaction was to be. He replied that if we could agree now not only to a Locarno meeting in principle but also to its place and date that would give the French something to take back to Paris. They would be able to claim that they had recreated Anglo-French friendship and this would greatly strengthen his hand in seeking to induce them to go as far as possible in negotiations.

3. I asked Monsieur van Zeeland whether he contemplated that Italians would attend the meeting. He replied that they must of course be invited as they had been invited to all other Locarno meetings. He thought himself that it was odds on that they would come and I had the impression that Monsieur van Zeeland may have had some reason which he did not tell me for giving this estimate.

4. Monsieur van Zeeland also spoke of relations between Germany and Italy. He was convinced and gave me the information which I would like to record to justify his conviction that Germany was not at present favouring a rapprochement with Italy. Germany feared extent of reaction in . . .³ which would follow Abyssinian triumph and was very sceptical of the strength of Italy's position six months from now. Monsieur van Zeeland shared that impression. He too thought reaction in Italy would be deep and that raising of sanctions though this would ultimately help Signor Mussolini economically would deprive him of a means of rallying his own people.

5. Monsieur van Zeeland spoke throughout this conversation with intense . . .³ of his own conviction that we should seize this opportunity for a joint approach to Germany through the medium of a meeting of Locarno Powers. He appreciated the hesitations I might have had if meeting had been for the purpose of determining breakdown of negotiations with Germany but that

³ The text was here uncertain.

was not his intention at all. Then proposal . . .³ rather to make a start in a new endeavour at the end of which we should either have brought Germany into negotiations or have shown that she was unnegotiable. Personally I was greatly impressed by Monsieur van Zeeland's arguments and if we are to agree to a Locarno meeting in principle I should infinitely prefer to be able to fix the date and place before I leave Geneva. Psychological effect of a complete announcement would be infinitely better both in Germany and in France than a mere declaration that a meeting was to be expected in the near future. I have considerable confidence in Monsieur van Zeeland's judgment and in his intimate relations with the French Ministers and I feel confident that he would not have spoken of proposed Locarno meeting in these terms unless he had been convinced that he would be able to bring them a great part of the way with him. Monsieur van Zeeland is shrewd enough to appreciate that for the sake of Belgium's future a sympathetic British and even United States public opinion is at least as important as military support of France. It is for this stake that he is probably playing. In any event we appear to have both in Belgium [*sic*] and French Prime Ministers most helpful collaborators we can look for from either of their countries from the point of view of negotiation with Germany. For all these reasons I attach the greatest importance to being able to fix July 16th at Brussels as the date and place for a Locarno meeting before I leave here on Saturday night.⁴

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome and Brussels.

⁴ Cf. *D.D.B., op. cit.*, No. 87.

No. 404

Foreign Office to Mr. Edmond (Geneva)

No. 58 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4784/4/18]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 3, 1936, 1.55 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State from Lord Cranborne.

Your telegram No. 90.¹

On receipt of your telegram indicating that you would like, before leaving Geneva, to accept in principle M. Blum's suggestion that a meeting of the Locarno Powers should be held in the near future, I got into communication with the Lord President of the Council, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary and Lord Halifax last night. I showed them your telegram and after consideration they were all agreed that it would be impossible not to accede to M. Blum's request that there should be agreement in principle as to such a meeting, so long as neither time nor place were fixed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, however, thought it important that a *communiqué* should be issued in view of M. Blum's statement that the fixing of a meeting was of the utmost importance to French public opinion. This

¹ No. 397.

indicated that some announcement would obviously be made and it would be far better in his opinion that it should be made in the form of an agreed *communiqué* to avoid the danger of wild rumours. He suggested the following form for your consideration. This form was agreed to by the other Ministers whom I consulted.

'As a result of conversations at Geneva between M. Blum, Mr. Eden and M. van Zeeland, it was agreed between them that a further meeting of the Locarno Powers to discuss the present situation would be desirable at an early date.

No decision was arrived at as to time or place of meeting but it was agreed that the invitations should be issued by M. van Zeeland after further consultation with those concerned.'

It should be explained that this text should be regarded as a draft and that in using the expression 'Locarno Powers' we of course do not intend to include Germany. The Ministers fully recognise that the exact wording would have to be agreed by you and the other foreign statesmen. The Chancellor considered that the merit of this form was that it did not specifically mention Italy and the point of her co-operation could be left over till later.

This morning I saw the Prime Minister who also expressed his agreement.

The Home Secretary emphasised the importance of finding out before you left Geneva what was to be the basis and purpose of the meeting. It would, as you point out, be undesirable that the meeting should merely be held in order to establish that the 'effort of conciliation' referred to in our letter of April 1st had failed.

As it is desirable that any *communiqué* should appear as far as possible simultaneously in Geneva, Paris and London, we shall be grateful for early information as to what is decided as to terms and times of issue.

No. 405

Foreign Office to Mr. Edmond (Geneva)

No. 61 Telegraphic [C 4804/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 3, 1936, 9.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 94.¹

Following from Sir R. Vansittart.

Very important considerations of policy appear to be involved in M. van Zeeland's proposal that Locarno Powers should at their forthcoming meeting confine their objectives to a new Locarno Treaty in the West and the return of Germany to the League. Does M. van Zeeland propose that the Western Powers should leave unsettled and disinterest themselves from the problems of Eastern and Central Europe or is it intended that the Western Powers should raise these problems in connexion with Germany's entry into the

¹ No. 403.

League, by insisting that Germany shall give special undertakings as to her intentions in Eastern and Central Europe before the Western Powers can agree—to quote paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the Covenant—that she has given ‘effective guarantees of her sincere intention to observe her international obligations’?

If M. van Zeeland proposes to abandon the policy hitherto pursued by His Majesty’s Government and France of negotiating with Germany a general European settlement in which all interested Governments would play their part then a fundamental change of policy is involved, the implications of which have not yet been studied. For instance, Russia and the Little Entente will of course raise violent objections, so much so that I should have doubted whether the French Government (or indeed His Majesty’s Government in view of their previous declarations that they were seeking nothing less than a European settlement) would be able to subscribe to it.

Another fact which I think ought to be borne in mind is that the German Government in offering to return to the League of Nations made it clear in their proposals of March 31st that in making this offer they expected that ‘within a reasonable time and by means of friendly negotiations the question of colonial equality of rights’ will be cleared up. It is essential therefore that before we commit ourselves to a policy of inviting Germany to return to the League His Majesty’s Government should have definitely decided whether or not they are prepared to negotiate with Germany a retrocession of the ex-German colonies. As you know, this question has not yet been considered by the Cabinet, although the material for doing so is contained in the report recently issued by Lord Plymouth’s Committee.²

It seems therefore important that we should have full time for consideration of these important matters.

² See No. 378.

No. 406

Letter from Sir S. Hoare to Mr. Eden

[R 3907/294/67]

Secret

ADMIRALTY, July 3, 1936

Dear S[ecretary] of S[tate],

My attention has been drawn to your telegram (No. 65)¹ of the 26th June from Geneva, giving an account of your interview with M. Pouritch, in the course of which you stated that it was the intention of His Majesty’s Government ‘to maintain forces in the Mediterranean in future which would be in excess of those which were at our disposal in that Sea when this dispute had broken out’.

So far as the Naval forces are concerned this statement is literally correct, because the Mediterranean Fleet at the end of last summer was not up to the

¹ No. 385.

strength which had been announced in the First Lord's Estimates Statement of March last year, but I think I ought to make it clear to you in case your statement should be called in question, that any increase in the actual strength of the Mediterranean Fleet or in its standard strength as announced in the Estimates Statement of 1935, cannot be achieved at the present time or in the near future. In 1939 however, when the ships of the New Construction begin to come into service and the process of modernising the old capital ships will have been almost completed, an appreciable increase in the numerical strength and power of the Mediterranean Fleet will take place.

As things stand at present, the actual strength of the Fleet in terms of large vessels is greater than it was in July 1935 by 1 battleship, 1 battle cruiser, 1 aircraft carrier and 2 cruisers.

Y[ou]rs,
SAMUEL HOARE

No. 407

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received July 4, 3.40 a.m.)

No. 96 Telegraphic [C 4846/4/18]

GENEVA, July 4, 1936, 2.30 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Monsieur van Zeeland, Monsieur Spaak, Monsieur Delbos and I dined together tonight¹ when we discussed French and Belgian request for an early meeting of Locarno powers. We agreed upon issue of following *communiqué*,² begins:

'As a result of conversations at Geneva between Monsieur Blum, Monsieur Delbos, Mr. Eden, Monsieur van Zeeland and Monsieur Spaak, it was agreed between them that a further meeting of the Locarno Powers, whose representatives drew up the London arrangement of March 19th,³ would be desirable at an early date to discuss present situation.

No final decision was arrived at as to time or place of meeting but it was agreed that invitations should be issued by Monsieur van Zeeland after a further consultation with those concerned.' Ends.

In all the circumstances this formula seems a satisfactory one. In the course of conversation I made it clear to Monsieur Delbos that the purpose of the meeting was not to take note of breakdown of negotiations but to make a further attempt at furthering a new Locarno agreement. Monsieur Delbos agreed and pointed out that Monsieur Blum's speech had shown clearly that the last thing the French Government desired was that we should at this stage give up our attempt to secure a Western European Agreement.⁴

Repeated to Paris, Brussels.

¹ i.e. July 3.

² Cf. No. 404.

³ Cf. No. 144.

⁴ See No. 401, note 3. The situation was reviewed at a meeting of ministers at 10 Downing Street on July 4 at 10 a.m. Mr. Baldwin explained that he had felt it necessary to summon

the ministers (Mr. J. R. MacDonald, Sir J. Simon, Lord Hailsham, and Lord Halifax, with Lord Cranborne and Sir R. Vansittart) to discuss the position set out in telegram No. 96. After Lord Cranborne had summarized the telegraphic exchanges between himself and Mr. Eden the meeting agreed that the *communiqué* reported in telegram No. 96 was 'as good an arrangement as could be hoped for in all the circumstances'. In the course of the discussion Mr. Baldwin emphasized that 'his apprehension had been lest Herr Hitler should think that this was another attempt to annoy Germany'.

No. 408

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received July 4, 4.50 p.m.)

No. 207 Telegraphic [C 4864/4/18]

BERLIN, July 4, 1936, 2.46 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State.

Your telegram No. 94 to Foreign Office.¹

Following appreciation of the situation as seen from here may be useful.

I heartily agree with most though not all of the views expressed by Monsieur van Zeeland. The attitude of previous French Governments has led to lapse of many German offers seen later to have been advantageous, e.g. in regard to Reparations, Saar and disarmament. If the present French Government is willing to face realities it seems most desirable to lose no more time in trying to extract whatever may be still possible from the last German offer.

Unfortunately Germany knows she has got away with rearmament and considers for all practical purposes she has got away with re-occupation of the Rhineland. She feels time is on her side both because her relative physical strength is apparently increasing and because time is needed for mentality of Versailles to disappear and for inevitable conclusions to be drawn from the fact of her growing strength. I fear Monsieur van Zeeland is therefore very optimistic in estimating the chances of German participation in an immediate Conference at 10 to 1 as mentioned in telegram No. 89² to the Foreign Office. Nevertheless Herr Hitler may be willing to participate, partly as evidence of good faith and of his own personal capacity to accomplish international as well as national reconstruction, partly as a means of registering improvement in Germany's position and partly also for economic reasons. If pressed to join the League of Nations forthwith he will however almost certainly ask what kind of League is meant. He will be very reluctant to join a League with a pedigree or to make any admissions which might seem to keep Eastern, South-eastern and Southern Europe in plaster of Paris.

Even however if larger questions had to be reserved at first conference it should at least be possible to pin Herr Hitler down to such parts of his peace plan as we wish. I imagine that any immediate progress in international collaboration however slight might greatly improve existing atmosphere and thus prepare the way for further progress in the early future. The prospects

¹ No. 403.

² No. 393.

of useful German collaboration would no doubt be greatly enhanced if it were possible to extend invitation to attend the next Locarno Conference *ab initio* and not merely as a sequel to a preliminary conference without Germany.

Addressed to Geneva No. 17 July 4th.

No. 409

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received July 4, 5.50 p.m.)

No. 208 Telegraphic [C 4865/4/18]

BERLIN, July 4, 1936, 3.35 p.m.

Sir E. Drummond's No. 427.¹

For reasons explained in my immediately preceding telegram² I hope it may be possible to facilitate acceptance of invitation by Italy. Unless the Italian Government take part German Government would hardly be willing to attend (see Sir E. Phipps' telegram No. 203³).

As regards last paragraph of Rome telegram German Government do not seem to have shown much response hitherto to Italian overtures (see Sir E. Phipps' No. 166 Saving⁴ and also his despatch No. 677⁵ recording remarks by Herr Dieckhoff on the subject).

German Government would no doubt be glad to use Italy in furtherance of her own objects e.g. perhaps for delaying participation in a conference. Generally speaking, however, German Government are likely to be chary of entering into any engagement because (i) they do not trust the Italians, (ii) it is felt that German population in the Tyrol has been very badly treated before and during Abyssinian war, and (iii) it is realized that German and Italian interests in Austria and South Eastern Europe are difficult to reconcile.

Repeated to Geneva and Rome.

¹ No. 398.

² No. 408.

³ No. 394.

⁴ No. 400.

⁵ No. 401.

No. 410

*Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople) to Foreign Office
(Received July 4, 9.50 p.m.)*

No. 47 Telegraphic [R 3900/294/67]

CONSTANTINOPLE, July 4, 1936, 5.45 p.m.

Addressed to Geneva No. 5 on July 4th.

I went to Angora yesterday to see Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs. It transpired that, as I had suspected after conversation with Turkish Prime

Minister reported in my telegram No. 3¹ to Geneva, the wording of your declaration in the House of Commons on June 18th² had inspired the Turkish Government with serious misgivings. Astonishing as it may seem they scented therein an intention on the part of His Majesty's Government to allow assurances exchanged last December to lapse quietly and unilaterally presumably in the interest of a bilaterally restored Anglo-Italian understanding.

2. In the circumstances your interview with Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs recorded in your telegram No. 77³ to Foreign Office and mine with Turkish Prime Minister above referred were particularly opportune.

3. Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs deemed Prime Minister's mind had been much easier after his speech with me. I feel confident last remnants of what was doubtful were completely dissipated by yesterday's interview at the conclusion of which Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs thanked me most cordially for having made pilgrimage to Angora and said that as result of our interview he felt a much happier and stronger man.

4. I gave His Excellency an accurate account of what had passed between you and Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs on June 27th (he had already M. Aras' report of the interview) and pointed out your statements amply covered all the points raised by Turkish Prime Minister with me and in a manner entirely satisfactory to Turkey. He agreed.

5. On him also I impressed our determination to strengthen our Mediterranean position, suggesting that herein lay *in reality* the best guarantee of all of Turkey's maritime security; and I told him that we had no intention whatsoever of abandoning Malta.

6. I furthermore gave him an outline of my personal views on the courageous, straightforward and realistic manner in which His Majesty's Government had confronted the complex dilemma arising out of Italy's military success in Ethiopia, and had evolved a coherent policy which took fully into account and harmonized the wide range of interests represented by British public opinion, the Sanctions issue, the futility of the League, general security, and staunch fidelity to the Powers who had stood together with us during the Ethiopian crisis.

7. His Excellency seemed to be considerably impressed; and comforted.

¹ No. 391.

² See No. 373, note 2.

³ No. 389.

No. 411

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Mr. Eden¹ (Received July 6, 1 p.m.)

No. 103 Telegraphic: by telephone [J 6025/757/1]

GENEVA, July 6, 1936

Following from Mr. Stevenson.

Co-ordination Committee unanimously adopted this morning the following

¹ Mr. Eden returned to London from Geneva by air on Sunday, July 5.

proposal to Governments.² 'The Co-ordination Committee set up in consequence of the Assembly recommendation of October 10th 1935³ with regard to the dispute between Ethiopia and Italy proposes that the Governments of the members of the League should abrogate on July 15th, 1936 the restrictive measures taken by them in conformity with its proposals 1(a), 2, 2(a), 3, 4 and 4(b).'⁴

² The Co-ordination Committee met at 10 a.m. on July 6 under the chairmanship of M. de Vasconcellos following the Assembly's request to the committee for requisite proposals concerning the termination of action under Article 16 of the Covenant: cf. No. 395, note 5. The proceedings are fully described in *L/N.O.J., S.S. No. 149*, pp. 56-65.

³ Cf. Volume XV, No. 64, note 2.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, Nos. 145, 178, and 303. In a circular despatch of July 25, 1936, Mr. Eden informed British representatives abroad that, in accordance with the decision of the Co-ordination Committee, an Order-in-Council was made on July 10 revoking the relevant Treaty of Peace (Covenant of the League of Nations) Orders of 1935. This applied within the United Kingdom; similar measures were being taken in the British Colonies, Protectorates and mandated territories, in Newfoundland and Southern Rhodesia, and in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

No. 412

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Mr. Eden (Received July 6, 4.30 p.m.)

No. 49 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4909/4/18]

Immediate

BRUSSELS, July 6, 1936

My telegram No. 48.¹

The Prime Minister realising that the 16th is too early² would like to know, so that he can consult the French, whether Wednesday, July 22nd, would suit you for Conference in Brussels.

He would be grateful for an answer if possible tomorrow.

¹ This telegram to the Foreign Office of July 2 quoted a Belgian press statement to the effect that the Locarno powers would meet in Brussels 'probably near July 20th'.

² Cf. Nos. 393 and 403.

No. 413

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Mr. Eden (Received July 6, 9 p.m.)

No. 50 Telegraphic [C 4924/4/18]

BRUSSELS, July 6, 1936, 7.18 p.m.

Geneva telegram No. 94¹ to Foreign Office.

Having in mind the obvious difficulties of His Majesty's Government as shown in Sir R. Vansittart's telegram No. 61² to Geneva, I sounded the Prime Minister's mind in visit of courtesy. He is out for establishment of practicable basis of discussion. He does not mind what is included but he has

¹ No. 403.

² No. 405.

no intention of going too far and fully realizes danger of combining inextricably permanent sacrosanct obligations with more judicial and dangerous ones. He would be prepared to deal with such more delicate questions as cannot be shelved by agreements of determined duration with possibility of renewed discussion at their expiration. He would be prepared if necessary in general interest to let any new agreement override any existing obligations or commitments where commonly agreed to be embarrassing. He would scrap Treaty of Versailles or make the best of it.

He insisted that his ideas are entirely flexible. Something must be done. A few months ago French co-operation would have been impossible, now it is possible. Further than that he would not commit himself.

He evidently had no views on the question of colonies nor of Russia's possible disquietude but he did not seem to consider an arrangement impossible with regard to France's obligations to Russia within the frame of the Covenant.

Should nothing big come of the meeting Locarno Powers would have lost nothing: announcement of the meeting would be in vague terms with no reference to any attempt to reach any far-reaching settlement. Reaction on Germany of the meeting of Locarno Powers would be in any case salutary.

In view of his clear motives (see your telegram No. 94) I venture to express the conviction that the Prime Minister can be trusted implicitly to avoid embarrassing His Majesty's Government in any way and could be of the utmost utility in clearing the atmosphere whatever be the result of Conference.³

³ The Foreign Office thought this telegram 'none too clear'. Mr. Wigram remarked that it was 'going a long way to talk of "scrapping the treaty of Versailles"', and previous information does not suggest that Belgium—or, I should think, M. van Zeeland has "no views on the question of colonies". R. F. Wigram. 7/7.' Mr. Sargent wrote on July 8: 'This tel. is gibberish.' On a letter from Sir E. Ovey to Mr. Wigram of July 6 Mr. Allen commented: 'This further explains Sir E. Ovey's views which are as confused & confusing as before. R. H. Allen. 10/7.' M. van Zeeland's views as expounded by Sir E. Ovey can be compared with those of M. Van Langenhove, Secretary-General of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a note of July 7, setting out the alternatives of defence policy open to the Belgian Government: *D.D.B., op. cit.*, No. 88.

No. 414

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8)

No. 695 [C 4967/4/18]

BERLIN, July 6, 1936

Sir,

With reference to Sir Eric Phipps' despatch No. 678 of July 2nd¹ I have the honour to state that Herr Dieckhoff informed me this morning that after

¹ See No. 381, note 4.

consulting the Minister for Foreign Affairs he could answer my enquiries regarding the fortification of Heligoland.

2. The reply was that in the exercise of their sovereignty the German Government claimed the right to fortify Heligoland and had already begun to do so.²

I have, etc.,

B. C. NEWTON

² A minute by Mr. Wigram read: 'Then this is perfectly clear. There is no more to be said. R. F. W. 8/7.'

No. 415

Letter from Admiral Sir E. Chatfield to Sir R. Vansittart

[R 4072/294/67]

Secret

ADMIRALTY, July 6, 1936

My dear Van,

The First Lord has asked me to get into touch with you at once about the raising of Sanctions and the redistribution of the Fleet. He said he did not think that any Cabinet decision was required and it is a matter that can be perfectly well arranged between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office. If you agree to this, as I hope you do, perhaps you will give me the word over the telephone as early as you can, as I do not want to keep the Fleet in what they may feel is rather a false position a moment longer than I need.

As far as I know the only immediate moves that would take place would be—the First Flotilla would come home from Malta and, possibly, one or two other ships. The remainder of the Mediterranean Fleet is having their Annual Regatta at Alexandria, which will not finish until the end of this week, but the important thing is for them to get the abandonment of Alexandria as a base started, which includes such things as dismounting guns and getting away our store-ships, oilers, ammunition ships, etc. At Gibraltar no *immediate* move is essential, and I should direct the Commander-in-Chief to make proposals for return to England. As regards the Red Sea forces, most of these are now on the East Coast of Africa, as you will remember, and I want to get the destroyers from there back to China at once.

What, therefore, we need here is to be able to send out a general message confidentially that the state of war readiness is ended, ordering a few important movements to take place which will not cause undue comment, and then inviting Commanders-in-Chief to make proposals for the dispersal of their Fleets and for the early return of them to their normal dispositions and stations.¹

Yours sincerely,

ERNLE CHATFIELD

¹ In a minute of July 6 Sir R. Vansittart said that he thought the Admiralty should have 'a free hand, subject to their not going far enough to invalidate' Mr. Eden's declaration of

June 18 (see No. 373, note 2) in the House of Commons. A further minute of July 7 reads: 'Seen & approved by Lord Halifax. Reply accordingly. R. V. July 7.'

No. 416

Mr. Roberts (Addis Ababa) to Mr. Eden (Received July 7, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 414 Telegraphic: by wireless [J 6103/3957/1]

Important

ADDIS ABABA, July 7, 1936

My telegram No. 412.¹

Yesterday morning parties of Carabineers arrived on the way to Legations (British, French, German and United States) which have wireless installations with orders to occupy these installations pending entry into force of a decree regulating private wireless stations to be issued that afternoon. I told the officer in command of the party which arrived at this Legation (unfortunately they had entered the grounds before their purpose was known) that I could not allow him to occupy our wireless station but to avoid difficulties I would undertake that traffic should be suspended till I had arranged matters with Marshal Graziani. This did not satisfy him and I was obliged to explain that in view of extraterritoriality of Legation I could not permit Italian authorities to exercise any jurisdiction there; I requested him to remove his party and when he replied that his orders precluded him from doing so I told him that I had now a party from the Legation guard placed over the wireless station. I also took steps to prevent any further intrusion by Italian armed parties. Diplomatic body at their monthly meeting that morning had considered the question and decided that Legations concerned should inform the Marshal that the question of continued use of their wireless was a matter for settlement between Governments concerned. I saw the Marshal yesterday afternoon and spoke to him in this sense, also protested against the violation of immunity of Legation premises. The Marshal pre-faced his reply by stating that it must be clearly understood he spoke as a private individual to a leading member of British community and not as Chargé d'Affaires. This note kept recurring throughout the conversation which lasted some two hours, United States Minister being present during the latter part of the time.

Marshal took the view that since he could not recognise Legations as such he must treat their wireless installations as private ones like any others. He was therefore entitled to regulate them as he thought fit (under his instructions from Rome) and the question of settlement between Governments did not arise.

It soon appeared that new decree would allow our wireless to continue

¹ This telegram, despatched from Addis Ababa by wireless on July 6, said that Marshal Graziani had that day issued on instructions from his Government a decree prohibiting the use of wireless installations by private persons. Legations were held to fall under this decree, but after a brief interruption of communication the Marshal had authorized the British Legation to continue to use its wireless under approved conditions.

working under conditions described in my telegram 412 and we at once said that we had no objection to complying with these. I repeated however that procedure adopted that morning was quite inadmissible and that I must request on any future occasion when the Marshal had any intimation to make he would send for me instead of acting in a manner almost suggesting that he was seeking to create incidents which it was surely in our joint interest to avoid. The Marshal virtually admitted procedure had been unfortunate and declared Carabineers had exceeded his instructions which were simply that an officer should notify each Legation that their wireless traffic must be suspended pending regulation of the matter under forthcoming decree. I am not entirely convinced by this explanation however: procedure adopted is only too consistent with the view that Legations as such no longer exist and must be treated simply as private premises and private individuals. It is also typical of unbelievable clumsiness of Italian methods here, a mountain of friction and unpleasantness bringing forth the ridiculous mouse of declaration, wavelengths etc. It is particularly characteristic that parties were sent to Legations in the morning to occupy wireless immediately on receipt of instructions from Rome to . . .² the matter by decree while it was not till the afternoon on application to the Marshal that Legations were able to learn of comparative innocuousness of regulation decreed.

Matter was settled the same evening in the manner reported in my telegram 412 and Carabineers withdrawn. In spite of difficulty and tension of the situation an amicable atmosphere was . . .² both in conversations with the Marshal and in relations with various Italian officers who visited the Legation in the course of the day in connexion with instructions.

A similar arrangement is being concluded with other Legations.

Please see my immediately following telegram.³

² The text was here uncertain.

³ In this telegram No. 415 of July 8 Mr. Roberts attributed Marshal Graziani's action to the belief that foreign legations and foreign communities were propagating alarmist reports in the town and that the former were reporting in an alarmist sense to their governments. In a further wireless telegram No. 416 of July 8 Mr. Roberts referred to No. 358 and said that while fully appreciating the distinction between form and substance he felt that the Italian Government 'should be moved, while fully maintaining in principle their refusal to recognize Legations, to send instructions to [Marshal Graziani] to treat them in practice in every respect as if their status *were* recognized'.

No. 417

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8, 9 a.m.)

No. 216 Telegraphic [C 4986/4/18]

BERLIN, July 7, 1936, 9.25 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me on July 7th that he now hoped to leave for Berchtesgaden at the end of this week and would try to extract reply to our questions from the Chancellor.

In response to a reference of mine to *communiqué* mentioned in your telegram No. 96¹ to Foreign Office Baron von Neurath showed that he did not anticipate or desire an early meeting of all the Locarno Powers. While disclaiming any particular information he said that his impression was that Italy would not take part. His own feeling moreover was that the time and atmosphere were not yet ripe for such a conference. It ought not to be hurried and if it met prematurely before success had been assured beforehand there would be too great a risk of a failure which might do much harm.

While making it quite clear that I was in no way reflecting official views I tried to draw him further by suggesting that even if some of the larger questions might not be ripe for settlement the atmosphere would perhaps be improved by the very fact of the Powers sitting down together at the conference table even if for the time being definite progress could only be made on minor questions. I pointed out too that Monsieur Blum seemed to be very well-disposed. With this last observation he quite agreed but he nevertheless felt that a conference in the immediate future would be premature. The German Government would welcome a conference in due course but he did not think it would take place at any rate before September. The reaction to the Chancellor's reply when made might, however, throw some further light on prospects of a successful meeting.²

¹ No. 407.

² Mr. Sargent commented on July 10 on this telegram: 'A galaxy of good reasons for wishing to keep their hands free.' Sir R. Vansittart wrote on July 11: 'They have never had any intention of keeping their hands anything but free.'

No. 418

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 67 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4909/4/18]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 7, 1936, 9.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 49.¹

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are prepared to agree to July 22nd as the date of the meeting in Brussels.

It is the understanding of His Majesty's Government that the purpose of this meeting is to facilitate a constructive approach to Germany which would result in direct conversations between the Locarno Powers.

His Majesty's Government are very much alive to the risk that the success of these direct conversations, and indeed the very prospect of their being held, may be prejudiced if any legitimate ground were given to Germany to draw the inference that the other Locarno Powers have settled in advance their policy on the matters to be discussed, leaving Germany to come in afterwards.

Therefore, whilst very much aware of the difficulties which are entailed

¹ No. 412.

by this proposal, His Majesty's Government are disposed to feel that the object of the meeting in Brussels should be to secure the assent of the Powers there represented to the despatch of an invitation to Germany to attend a further conference of the Locarno Powers with a view to discussing means of ameliorating the international situation and in particular the discussion of a western treaty of non-aggression and mutual assistance and the return of Germany to the League of Nations.

You should read to the Belgian Prime Minister this telegram of which you are authorised to leave with him a copy. You should enquire whether he agrees to this basis for proposed Brussels meeting, and if so, whether he will take steps to ascertain that the French Government also agree.

You should point out to Monsieur van Zeeland that it would be undesirable to make a definite announcement that the meeting will take place until agreement has been reached on this basis. Once that is the case, His Majesty's Government would be quite agreeable to the issue of the invitations by Monsieur van Zeeland.²

Repeated to Paris No. 162, Rome No. 227 and Berlin No. 135.

² The instructions to Sir E. Ovey in this telegram were those agreed to by the Cabinet at its important meeting on July 6. Mr. Eden reported on the recent meetings of the League Council and Assembly, which he described as the most exacting and depressing which he had attended. He felt that the international situation was so serious that from day to day there was risk of some dangerous incident or even an outbreak of war. He thought that the Prime Minister should explain the gravity of the situation to the heads of the press and leaders of the Opposition, in order to avoid injudicious action. The Cabinet then discussed the possible terms of an agreement with Germany at the proposed meeting of Locarno powers; it was agreed that if Germany raised the colonial question 'we should make it quite clear that we would give up nothing'. It was also agreed that the meeting of the Locarno powers at Brussels on July 22 should be held solely for the purpose of sending an invitation to Germany and bringing Germany into the League of Nations. A fuller text of the minutes of this Cabinet meeting is printed in Appendix II to this Volume.

No. 419

Mr. J. Balfour¹ (Belgrade) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8)

No. 34 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4232/294/67]

BELGRADE, July 7, 1936

Yugoslavia official circles are greatly heartened by your speech at Geneva² which combined with your speech in the House of Commons on June 18th³ and with other recent pronouncements by members of His Majesty's Government gives them the assurance that Great Britain has no intention whatever of disinteresting herself in the Mediterranean. They are also favourably impressed by new French Government, Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarking to me yesterday that M. Blum showed signs of

¹ First Secretary in H.M. Legation at Belgrade, acting as Chargé d'Affaires.

² See No. 395.

³ See No. 373, note 2.

emulating the example of the late M. Briand and of the President of the Republic: a policy of close collaboration with His Majesty's Government and Little Entente.

No. 420

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 434 Telegraphic [C 4977/4/18]

ROME, July 8, 1936, 12.40 a.m.

My telegram No. 433.¹

My French colleague told me this morning that he had a few days ago received rather indefinite instructions to seek interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in order to inform the latter that the Italian Government would shortly receive invitation to attend the meeting of the Locarno Powers and to take soundings on his statement. He had done so and Count Ciano had replied rather vaguely that he would examine the question. In the course of that reply Count Ciano had referred to the difficulties of the international situation caused particularly by the Mediterranean naval agreements which he stigmatized anew as directed against Italy. My French colleague had again asserted that they were purely defensive in character but had failed to move Count Ciano. On July 4th the French Ambassador had a further interview with the Minister who, referring spontaneously to the Locarno meeting, had stated that while final decision had not yet been reached he was extremely doubtful whether Italy would accept the invitation; and he yet again mentioned the Mediterranean agreement.

Both my French colleague and I agree that it is as yet far from certain that the Italians will accept the Belgian invitation. The Italians probably argue as follows. These naval agreements were part and parcel of the sanctions policy. The Italian Government made it plain publicly and also semi-officially to the French Government that if sanctions were raised they would resume collaboration in Europe. Sanctions are now being raised but the naval agreements are to remain in force. This is unfair and further shows that the Italian word is mistrusted (for express assurances were given by Signor Grandi on behalf of Signor Mussolini that Italy did not propose to indulge in any further aggression). The fact that Mussolini's previous actions have been such that pledges given now are naturally regarded with suspicion is a point which is not appreciated by Mussolini who may well be genuinely hurt by our attitude.

I doubt whether anything I can do is likely to modify the Italian policy, but if you think a frank talk with the Minister for Foreign Affairs advisable you will no doubt send me full instructions. Perhaps however the best plan

¹ This telegram of July 6 reported a statement to the press by an Italian official to the effect that Italy would not take part in the Montreux conference (see Chapter VI below) while the Mediterranean naval agreements of December 1935 were still in force.

would be to ask the Belgians to explain very fully the scope and purposes of the proposed meeting to the Italians when forwarding their invitation.²

Repeated to Paris.

² Mr. Sargent on July 10 made the general comment on this telegram: 'These soundings in Rome by the French seem to be somewhat premature and may lead to unfortunate misunderstandings if we are not careful.'

No. 421

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8, 3.30 p.m.)

No. 52 Telegraphic [C 4978/4/18]

Important

BRUSSELS, July 8, 1936, 2.29 p.m.

Your telegram No. 67.¹

First reaction of Prime Minister and of Minister for Foreign Affairs seems entirely favourable.

Prime Minister will however consult his Government before returning official reply.

I gather he will set to work to approach French Government forthwith.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, judging from a recent conversation he had had with French Ambassador, seems fairly optimistic in regard to French Government's attitude.

Repeated to Paris, Rome and Berlin.

¹ No. 418; cf. *D.D.B., op. cit.*, No. 89.

No. 422

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received July 9)

No. 704 [C 4999/3790/18]

BERLIN, July 8, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you the copy of a minute by the Military Attaché regarding the present state of the German Army.

2. The provision of new and up to date equipment, and its constant renovation are of course made possible by the fact that the Army, like the Air Force, enjoys the backing of the entire financial and industrial resources of this country, in addition to its tremendous reserves of man power.

3. With regard to paragraph 4 of Colonel Hotblack's minute, it must be remembered that the unpreparedness of the army did not prevent the sudden reoccupation of the Rhineland; and that it would probably not be the decisive factor were Herr Hitler to make up his mind that the advantage of a

surprise attack or of a particular political situation outweighed those of waiting for the attainment of the optimum military preparedness.

I have, etc.,

B. C. NEWTON

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 422

Minute by Colonel Hotblack on the Present State of the German Army

BERLIN, July 6, 1936

1. I have recently been given the opportunity to visit the training of cavalry, medium artillery, and mechanized reconnaissance units of the German Army. As is usual in Germany, the *Reichskriegsministerium* insisted on driving me to and fro and paying all expenses. The attitude throughout of all the German officers was very friendly, the opinions of German officers, however, concerning Germany's past grievances and its future rights differ very widely from the British point of view. All the units were in a state of transition and officers appeared to be genuinely ignorant of the developments that were to take place.

2. In order to give a criterion it may be stated that the British Army still compares favourably with the German in training and tactical ideas, but would appear to be at a very great disadvantage in the matter of equipment, since the German Army is not only obtaining a large supply of extremely efficient material, but is apparently backed by an organization which is prepared to make progressive use of new developments and to continue the supply of up to date equipment.

3. An important factor in these rapid improvements is that comparatively large quantities of experimental equipment are produced and after experience has been gained are rapidly replaced by improved material.

4. It is clear that, as far as the Army itself is concerned, it is anxious to avoid war until it has had time to improve its training, organize its reserves, and to benefit by a full issue of new equipment.

5. Except in East Prussia, cavalry now exists only in the form of one regiment per Army Corps, but the size and organization of this regiment is under consideration and it would appear that in future it will consist of two sub-units, one of which will be entirely horsed and the other entirely mechanized—light armoured cars, motor-cyclist machine-guns etc.

6. The medium artillery regiment consists of 10.5 cm. guns and 15-cm. Howitzers (an improvement on the well known 5.9" of the last war).

7. The regiments consist at present of horse-drawn and mechanized batteries, and the organization is obviously temporary. There is no doubt, however, that the new type of 15-cm. Howitzer is an extremely efficient weapon, which in addition to being able to fire at about 15,000 yards can also fire direct, like a gun, at 1000 yards.

8. The mechanized reconnaissance units, some of which are allotted to the armoured divisions and others are apparently intended as Army troops,

are now receiving a new improved light armoured car, which is replacing the light armoured car issued about eighteen months ago. This small vehicle is driven on all four wheels, has a 75 horse-power engine, and has a maximum speed of about 50 miles per hour: it has a wonderful cross-country performance.

9. The reconnaissance unit contains, in addition, heavy armoured cars with 2-cm. anti-tank guns, 3.7-cm. anti-tank guns, heavy machine-guns, light machine-guns, and material for creating and removing road obstacles. It is at present somewhat complicated in organization and not very far advanced in training.

10. It would seem likely that the 3.7-cm. anti-tank gun will be left out of these units when the 2-cm. anti-tank gun has been fitted into the new light armoured car; at present these latter have only one light machine-gun.

11. From various small indications it seems to be certain that a new armoured division is being formed in Western Germany, in addition to the three armoured divisions that already exist.

ELLIOT HOTBLACK

No. 423

Foreign Office¹ to Mr. Roberts (Addis Ababa)

No. 347 Telegraphic [J 6108/3957/1]

Most Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 9, 1936, 4.30 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 417 to 423 inclusive² have not yet been received. With this reservation, following are principles which you should observe in situation described in your telegrams Nos. 412 to 425³.

1. Subject to (4) below it is essential that you should act in conjunction with other Missions in Addis Ababa who are in a similar position, and you should therefore meet them with a view to the adoption of a common policy and common approach to the Italian Authorities.

2. You should do all you can to induce Italian Authorities to forego claim to prohibit use of Legation wireless. Should, however, Authorities persist in demand, we should be bound to acquiesce in view of their position of *de facto* occupation, though we should do so under protest. But we must be fully

¹ It was reported in *The Times* of July 8, 1936, p. 14, that Mr. Eden had been advised by his doctors to take a week's rest in the country. Lord Halifax took charge of the Foreign Office during his absence. Mr. Eden returned to work on July 15 (*ibid.*, July 15, p. 16).

² Not printed. Telegram No. 417, despatched by wireless from Addis Ababa on July 7, was received in the Foreign Office on July 9. It stated that the few telegrams received by the legation through Italian channels had been delayed and sometimes incomplete. Telegrams Nos. 418, 419, and 420 have not been preserved in the Foreign Office archives. Telegrams Nos. 421, 422, and 423, all of July 8, dealt with aspects of the Italian administration.

³ Cf. note 2 above. For telegram No. 414 see No. 416 above, see also *ibid.*, notes 1 and 3, and No. 424, note 3, below. Other telegrams not printed.

assured that in present conditions in Abyssinia we should not be debarred from cypher communication. Should wireless be interfered with, you should therefore continue to communicate in cypher even though you may have reason to suppose that Italian censorship is holding up your telegrams. En clair telegrams reporting despatch of cypher telegrams should be sent.

3. Even if you are forced to undertake not to use wireless, this should not involve occupation of the wireless station by the Italians. If they insist on this occupation, an additional protest should be made on the ground of violation of the immunity of the Legation.

4. You are neither expected nor desired to offer resistance to *force majeure*. Neither wireless installation nor any other part of the Legation must be defended against Italians. Should these latter insist upon occupation in the teeth of your protest you should make it clear that you yield to *force majeure*, and under protest.

This telegram is being repeated to Rome, where we are making strong representations, and of this you may inform Marshal Graziani. Please see my telegram No. 239⁴ to Sir E. Drummond which is being repeated to you.

⁴ No. 424 below.

No. 424

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 239 Telegraphic [J 6108/3957/1]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 9, 1936, 5 p.m.

My telegram No. 347¹.

Without disclosing to the Italians instructions which have been issued to Mr. Roberts you should take an early opportunity to protest against:

(1) the infringement of the Legation's immunity by the entrance of Italian troops.

(2) the prohibition of the continued use of the Legation wireless.

(3) the hint given by Marshal Graziani (penultimate paragraph of Mr. Roberts' telegram No. 415²) that *all* communication in cypher might be prohibited.

You should urge that immediate instructions may be despatched that His Majesty's Legation may be assured of its full immunity in practice even though the Italians declined to recognise its status in principle. It follows that the decree referred to in Mr. Roberts' telegrams Nos. 424³ and 425

¹ No. 423.

² Cf. No. 416, note 3.

³ In this telegram of July 8 Mr. Roberts reported a further order by Marshal Graziani that 'for reasons of public order' permission previously given to continue operation of legation wireless stations was to be withdrawn for fifteen days. In telegram No. 425 of even date he said it was clear that the order was due to the desire to prevent the outside world from receiving reports on the cutting of the railway. The decree dealt with transmitters only. Mr. Roberts had told General Graziani that he must await Mr. Eden's instructions before closing the station.

ought to be modified in the same way as that referred to in his telegram No. 412.⁴

You may, if you think fit, remind the Italian Government that they have themselves repeatedly declared that the war in Abyssinia is at an end. Panic measures such as these introduced for military reasons hardly seem to justify this contention.

French, German and American Governments are being urged to instruct their representatives in Rome in a similar sense. But you should not wait for their support before acting on these instructions.

⁴ Cf. No. 416, note 1.

No. 425

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 241 Telegraphic [R 3928/3928/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 9, 1936, 6.30 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 433¹ and 434².

Counsellor of the Italian Embassy called on Mr. Sargent on July 7th, and, speaking without instructions from his Government, suggested that they misunderstood object of recent declaration regarding lesser Mediterranean Powers.³ They suspected that it represented an agreement between His Majesty's Government and these Powers, and that latter had given us unpublished undertakings in return for our assurances. Signor Vitetti surmised that this supposed agreement was regarded in Rome as starting point for permanent anti-Italian bloc.

Mr. Sargent explained fully object and character of our declaration, that it was unilateral, that we had not discussed matter beforehand with any foreign Government, and that we had neither asked nor received any corresponding assurances. Provisional character and limited application of our assurance was emphasised, as stated by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons and at Geneva.⁴

Signor Vitetti will probably pass substance of this conversation on to Count Ciano, privately.

You are authorised to use this information at your discretion.

¹ Not printed; see No. 420, note 1.

² No. 420.

³ See No. 373, note 2.

⁴ Cf. No. 395.

No. 426

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 242¹ Telegraphic [R 4071/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 9, 1936, 10.30 p.m.*

Following for Naval Attaché.

From D.N.I.² Instructions have been given for ships temporarily detached from various stations to the Mediterranean and Red Sea to return to their normal stations. Home Fleet will return to Home Ports shortly to give usual summer leave and Mediterranean Fleet to Malta or as ordered by Commander in Chief Mediterranean preparatory to its usual autumn cruise. Ships and additional personnel sent to Mediterranean from Home Station are returning to United Kingdom. Summary of intended movements will be forwarded by next bag.³

¹ Despatched at the request of the Intelligence Division of the Naval Staff of the Admiralty. A marginal note reads: 'Charged to Admiralty.'

² Director of Naval Intelligence; Rear Admiral J. A. G. Troup.

³ Not printed; cf. No. 415.

No. 427

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 243 Telegraphic [R 4072/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 9, 1936, 10.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 242.¹

Admiralty are telegraphing to Naval Attaché summary of Fleet reductions in Mediterranean which, though not so large as to nullify my statement in the House of Commons,² that we should keep larger forces in the Mediterranean than formerly, are still very considerable.

You should call attention of Italian Government to these movements, and suggest that they speak for themselves and are surely a conclusive answer to the misgivings aroused in Italy by assurances to lesser Mediterranean Powers and evidence of the genuine character of my statement in the House of Commons 'that we regard any such eventuality as those assurances covered not only as hypothetical but as improbable'.

It is of course not the case, and I should not wish to give the impression that Fleet movements referred to had been decided upon in any way as a concession to what we feel was gratuitous suspicion and excitement in Italy, but if the effect of them is, as I trust it will be, to abate these feelings we shall expect to see a marked and immediate response in the attitude both of the Italian Government and of the Italian forces.

It is probable that I shall be able to inform you tomorrow of substantial

¹ No. 426.

² i.e. Mr. Eden's statement of June 18; cf. No. 373, note 2.

withdrawals of aircraft from Mediterranean also, but until you hear further from me you should say nothing definite on this point.

I leave to your discretion form in which you will use information contained in this telegram in conversation with Italian Government.

No. 428

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 443 Telegraphic [J 6172/3957/1]

ROME, July 10, 1936, 6.10 a.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to see him this evening¹ and welcomed me most enthusiastically. When he said 'what a magnificent day's work your Government has done for better relations between our two countries' I looked a little blank and he then enquired whether I had not received the news. On a negative reply from me he produced last edition of evening paper and told me that it contained report that British Cabinet had decided to reduce the Mediterranean Fleet to 1932 level and to return additional units of that fleet to their home stations.² I said I had no confirmation of this decision and asked whether he had any official news as I thought it unwise to trust entirely to newspaper reports. Count Ciano brushed this warning aside referring to certain Reuter telegrams and went on to say that not only Italian Government but Italian people would be most happy to learn of this decision and that a great step had been taken towards restoration of old friendship between the two countries. Italy had felt very deeply over continuance of Mediterranean agreements but these were clearly now things of the past and he implied, though he did not say so definitely, that last obstacle to Italian collaboration in Europe had disappeared (I gathered from His Excellency's tone that it might well be that it was the strength of Mediterranean Fleet rather than the agreements themselves to which Italy had taken such objection).

His Excellency then went on to say that this decision had a certain bearing on the question which had prompted his desire to see me and he then read to me text of a telegram he had just addressed to Signor Vitetti. This telegram complained of anti-Italian attitude of British Legation at Addis Ababa. Friction was continuous between Chargé d'Affaires and Marshal Graziani and an instance of Mr. Robert's [*sic*] hostility was fact that he had refused, alone amongst the legations, to accept recent regulations about wireless transmissions.³ On this I remarked that I was quite certain Mr. Roberts was not in any way inspired by anti-Italian sentiments. He had a very difficult task to protect interests of British subjects and incidents had

¹ i.e. July 9.

² Sir S. Hoare made a statement on these lines at question time in the House of Commons on July 9: 314 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1397-8; cf. *The Times*, July 10, p. 16.

³ Cf. Nos. 416 and 423.

occurred in which these interests had certainly not been respected by Italian authorities. As regards wireless I understood Mr. Roberts had asked for instructions, which was undoubtedly correct course. I had not at all the impression that relations between Mr. Roberts and Marshal Graziani were so strained. Count Ciano obviously knew nothing of the question and had simply been given a brief by Colonial Office; he was not therefore prepared to argue. Second part of telegram related to Mr. Erskine and stressed his anti-Italian actions. I stated that here again I felt sure Mr. Erskine's action was not in any way anti-Italian. It had been directed solely to keeping order in territories where there was no Government. I added that Mr. Erskine depended on instructions direct from London and not from Addis Ababa. Count Ciano remarked that however this might be he had felt bound to warn His Majesty's Government that measures might have to be taken to bomb the region of Gore where several Italian aeroplanes had been destroyed. Last part of instructions to Signor Vitetti were to the effect that in view of happy decision taken by the Cabinet in regard to Mediterranean etc. it would be sad if local incidents in Abyssinia created friction between the two countries just at a moment when better relations would certainly ensue. Count Ciano repeated this remark to me and urged the point very strongly. Anti-Italian feeling of Mr. Roberts and action of Mr. Erskine ought not to be allowed to stand in the way of such important European questions. He begged that I should press this point of view on His Majesty's Government. I repeated that I could not admit that either Mr. Roberts or Mr. Erskine were anti-Italian but that I would of course transmit substance of his observations to my Government.

No. 429

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 444 Telegraphic [C 5026/4/18]

ROME, July 10, 1936, 6.10 a.m.

Belgi[an] Chargé d'Affaires¹ told me this evening² that on instructions from his Government he had invited Italian Government to come to a conference of Locarno Powers on July 22nd. Instructions were very brief and gave no account of objects of Conference.

Count Ciano whom he had seen seemed to have little grasp of the subject and had replied 'A Conference of Locarno Powers: I must come to that myself'. His Excellency then asked whether Germany would be present and Chargé d'Affaires explained he did not think she would be invited as meeting would be between the Powers who had participated in March meeting. Count Ciano had said 'Yes, a pre-Locarno Conference. The first question is then whether Italy should participate rather than who should be Italian

¹ The Comte du Chastel.

² i.e. July 9.

representative'. Count Ciano promised reply for July 8th or July 9th but Chargé d'Affaires has heard nothing more. He asked for my views.

I told him I had no instructions on the subject but speaking personally I did not think Italy would accept invitation to any conference if she thought it would be directed against Germany.

If it were a preliminary meeting of Locarno Powers held with the object of arranging further conference in which Germany would participate, then I doubted whether Italy would refuse. I added on a point of such importance that he should obtain instructions from his Government. Chargé d'Affaires remarked that Count Ciano although mentioning the Mediterranean agreements in conversation had not made any conditions with regard to them.

No. 430

Foreign Office to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 69 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5026/4/18]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 10, 1936, 5.15 p.m.*

Rome telegrams Nos. 434¹ and 444.²

We had supposed that first step which Belgian Prime Minister would take would be to make sure that French Government accepted programme in my telegram No. 67.³

It now appears that soundings regarding Italian participation in conference are being taken in Rome both by French and Belgian embassies; but this seems to be premature until French government have agreed to programme.

Can you ascertain at once result of enquiry presumably addressed by Belgian Prime Minister to French Government? Sir R. Vansittart was informed by French Ambassador this morning⁴ that his government was unlikely to accept basis of conversation proposed. French Ambassador said very clearly that his government preferred basis of Geneva *communiqué* of July 3rd (see Geneva telegram 96)⁵ which had already been unanimously agreed to, and they were unable to understand why we wished to depart from it. Full text of French Ambassador's remarks will be sent shortly.⁴

Repeated to Paris No. 23 Saving and Rome No. 247.

¹ No. 420.

² No. 429.

³ No. 418.

⁴ No. 446 below.

⁵ No. 407.

*Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)**No. 246 Telegraphic [R 4105/294/67]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 10, 1936, 6 p.m.*

The French Ambassador¹ called on Sir R. Vansittart on July 9th, and said that Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had evidently given Italian Government impression that our recent assurances to lesser Mediterranean Powers were of a more formidable and lasting nature than was really the case. His Excellency said that Italian Government evidently were either disposed to take or sincerely did take exaggerated view of position and would most probably refuse participation at Montreux² and Locarno meeting, unless British assurances to lesser Mediterranean Powers were withdrawn, and that German refusal to participate in latter would follow. French Ambassador feared this would create impression that Germany and Italy were in the cold together and therefore drawing closer together for warmth, and this impression would receive marked confirmation if, as His Excellency believed, an agreement between Germany and Austria, that is, in reality, between Germany and Italy, were within sight.

He was very anxious to know what attitude of His Majesty's Government would be if Italy made formal approach to us for withdrawal of assurances, and enquired whether anything of the kind had happened.

Sir R. Vansittart replied in the negative, though we knew Italian Government were raising difficulties. If such an approach were made to us he thought, speaking for himself only, that much would depend on manner as well as matter of such representations. Sir R. Vansittart thought it would be exceedingly foolish and tactless of Italy to raise difficulties when they knew well how little real ground there was for them in view of Secretary of State's statement in the House of Commons.³

Sir Robert added that French Ambassador knew as well as he did that Italy had really no intention of attacking lesser Mediterranean Powers at this moment, none of which entertained such apprehensions seriously any longer. Whole difficulty was therefore quite unreal, and Italian Government must surely know that it would be unreal if they intended to raise it. If, however, they did so, much would depend on how it was done. If they were to inform Secretary of State that they would not co-operate in any European matter unless assurances were withdrawn, that would very likely be considered and would look distinctly like dictation and blackmail. If they intended to raise matter at all, only way would surely be first to reiterate in most profuse and solemn way every possible tranquil[1]ising assurance to Mediterranean Powers concerned, and then to ask whether, in view of such assurances from them, His Majesty's Government still found it necessary to maintain their

¹ For M. Corbin's instructions to seek this interview, and his account of it, see *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 408 and 415.

² See Chapter VI below.

³ See No. 373, note 2.

own assurances to lesser Mediterranean Powers. Even so, Sir R. Vansittart could not predict what view His Majesty's Government would take, but second course would naturally not make matters as hopeless as first.

French Ambassador entirely agreed and will so inform French Government, who, no doubt, will inform Italian Government accordingly.

This telegram is for your guidance in conversations with Italian Government arising out of my telegrams Nos. 241⁴ and 243.⁵

⁴ No. 425.

⁵ No. 427. A note, undated, by Mr. W. R. C. Green, a First Secretary in the Southern Department, on the filed copy of this telegram, reads: 'In accordance with instructions I 'phoned Sir E. Drummond & told him not to act on telegrams 241 & 243 until he got this.'

No. 432

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Foreign Office (Received July 10, 9.45 p.m.)

No. 55 Telegraphic [C 5074/4/18]

Important

BRUSSELS, July 10, 1936, 8.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 52.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs sent for me today to explain position.

As regards Italy there was still complete silence. No answer whatever had been returned.

As regards France he thought matters were progressing.

The only news he had reference Italy arose from a conversation reported to him between the Italian Ambassador at Berlin and the German Minister for Foreign Affairs in which the latter had suggested present moment was not particularly propitious and that October would be better. His Excellency deduced that Italian Ambassador had asked advice of German Government and that this reply represented Germany's point of view and was meant as a guide to Italy. His Excellency had been optimistic regarding Italy's attitude but the continued silence and this report together had made him wonder whether he had not been over optimistic. News reference withdrawal of British ships from the Mediterranean seemed helpful.²

As regards France, French Government saw no fundamental objection but was anxious to keep *communiqué* or invitation to Conference as anodyne as possible on lines of *communiqué* issued at Geneva. They would prefer that any further developments on lines of general peace plan should arise from Conference itself rather than be in any way adumbrated before. He did not find him [? them] unreasonable as regards ultimate scope of conversations. His Government were, however, going to continue to work on French Government and hoped in 48 hours to bring them round further.

Repeated to Rome, Paris and Berlin.

¹ No. 421.

² See No. 428.

No. 433

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 251 Telegraphic [R 4123/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 10, 1936, 11.45 p.m.*

My telegram No. 243.¹

Withdrawal of air reinforcements despatched to Mediterranean and North East African areas last autumn has now begun. It is not considered advisable to state exact number of units being withdrawn.

¹ No. 427.

No. 434

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 252 Telegraphic [R 4127/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 10, 1936, 11.45 p.m.*

My telegram No. 241.¹

Signor Vitetti yesterday read to Mr. Sargent a private letter which he was sending to Count Ciano recording the conversation reported in above telegram. Signor Vitetti's account was accurate and reasonable.

Signor Vitetti said that since the above mentioned conversation he had received instructions to bring this matter officially to the notice of His Majesty's Government. It appears (and this was confirmed by the French Ambassador in conversation with Sir R. Vansittart) that M. Léger, in a recent conversation with the Italian Ambassador in Paris, had assured the latter that the French Government considered that all the undertakings regarding mutual assistance which were given last December in virtue of paragraph 3 of Article 16 of the Covenant had now lapsed with the removal of sanctions. On the Italian Ambassador enquiring whether this was equally the view of His Majesty's Government, M. Léger had suggested that the Italian Government had better address themselves on this point direct to His Majesty's Government.²

Signor Vitetti was therefore now instructed to ask whether it was the view of His Majesty's Government that all the above undertakings had lapsed with the removal of sanctions, and, if so, what was the reason for and the purport of the declaration made by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons and at Geneva in regard to the lesser Mediterranean Powers.

Signor Vitetti mentioned incidentally that the suspicions in Rome had, since the previous conversation, been to a considerable extent allayed by the decision of His Majesty's Government to withdraw the additions made to the

¹ No. 425.

² Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 408.

Mediterranean Fleet last October and by the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on July 8th reported in my telegram No. 244.³

³ Of July 9, not printed. For Mr. Baldwin's statement, see 314 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1169-70.

No. 435

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Foreign Office (Received July 11)

No. 176 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5071/4/18]

BERLIN, July 10, 1936

My despatch No. 721 of July 10th.¹

I have little doubt that this article is inspired. A high official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told a British informant yesterday that a Locarno meeting excluding Germany would have disastrous effect here.

¹ It was reported in this despatch that Herr Kircher, writing in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of July 10, had put forward a demand that Germany should participate, *ab initio*, in any conference of Locarno Powers.

No. 436

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 12, 2.35 p.m.)

No. 451¹ Telegraphic [C 5103/4/18]

ROME, July 11, 1936, 11.20 a.m.

Meeting of Locarno Powers.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said this evening that he would like to talk over with me the reply which Italian Government had sent this afternoon to Belgian invitation to attend such a meeting on July 22nd.² He gave me reply to read which after expressing courteous appreciation of invitation was to the effect (A) that Italian Government did not see their way to resume co-operation in European affairs until question of certain pledges which had their origin in application of Article 16 of the Covenant had been cleared up (B) that the Italian Government did not think that a meeting even of a preliminary character would be useful unless Germany were also invited.³

2. On point (A) I observed that I greatly regretted this statement. It would, I felt sure produce a very bad effect on His Majesty's Government. I pointed out again (see my immediately preceding telegram¹ describing talk over Mediterranean situation and agreements) that Italy seemed to be saying: we shall not resume co-operation until you abandon your policy. This as I had already explained seemed to me to be an effort at dictation. Count Ciano repeated most of the observations he had already made and

¹ This telegram and No. 439 below were despatched in reverse order.

² See No. 430.

³ See *D.D.B.*, *op. cit.*, No. 94.

begged me to do my best to set out fully to my government Italian point of view. He emphasized once more that dictation had never entered into Italian mind. Note had been despatched some three or four hours before our present conversation. As a matter of fact I think he was already quite well aware of unilateral character of our declaration and I do not think that even if he had been able to see me before, any change would have been made in reply.

3. On point B I said what Italian Government were proposing was no longer meeting of Locarno Powers since Germany had denounced Locarno treaty. His Excellency agreed but said that we must now get back to pre-Locarno and he felt sure that my government wished equally with Italian Government to get Germany into a general peace settlement. Italian Government were convinced that a preliminary meeting without Germany would only arouse suspicion in that country and would not therefore be helpful. I said that our object too was to bring Germany into a general peace settlement: apparently we only differed on the question of procedure. Was it wiser to attempt this task in two stages or in one? I knew he had already seen my French colleague. Could he tell me what the latter had said on this subject? I learnt that the French Ambassador had made no observation on this particular point but had asked two definite questions. The first was whether Italian reply had been given after consultation with Germany. His Excellency's answer to this had been no; it was entirely the work of Italian Government. Second was whether any political arrangement existed between Germany and Italy. To this he had also answered no, but of course I would realise that relations between the two countries had considerably improved and there was a good deal of understanding between them; but no definite political arrangement. Approaching agreement between Austria and Germany would increase the good feeling between Italy and Germany. Negotiations had been carried on with full knowledge of Italy who had been loyally consulted by Austrian Government on all points. He expected signature very shortly.⁴ I enquired whether apart from assurances to be given by Germany as to independence of Austria there was anything about non-interference with Austrian internal affairs. Count Ciano said that he believed that there was but he did not seem absolutely certain on the point.⁵

4. His Excellency assured me and I think quite genuinely that he was very anxious to work closely with my country and that his great ambition was to see most cordial relations restored. Italy only wanted now to be left in quiet.

⁴ It was announced on Saturday, July 11, that Germany and Austria had signed in Vienna an agreement 'for the re-establishment of normal and friendly relations'. The German Government recognized the full sovereignty of the Federal State of Austria. The Austrian Government promised to maintain a policy 'based always on the principle that Austria acknowledges herself to be a German State'. Each government promised not to interfere in the domestic policies of the other country. There were provisions dealing with economic relations, tourist traffic, the press, *émigré* problems, and the display of national insignia. The agreement and press *communiqués* thereon are printed in *D.G.F.P., op. cit.*, pp. 755-60; the volume also prints documents relating to the preceding negotiations.

⁵ Cf. *D.D.F., op. cit.*, Nos. 417 and 431.

She had a terrific task in the development of Abyssinia and she had no aggressive designs against any nation whatever. She would stand for peace in the same way as did Great Britain.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Brussels and Vienna.

No. 437

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 253 Telegraphic [R 4135/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 11, 1936, 4 p.m.*

My telegram No. 252.¹

The questions raised by Signor Vitetti have now been answered verbally on the following lines.

As to whether it was the view of His Majesty's Government that all the undertakings of mutual assistance which were given last December in virtue of paragraph 3 of Article 16 of the Covenant had lapsed with the removal of sanctions, he was referred to my statements in the House of Commons² and at Geneva³ on June 18th and July 1st respectively, namely, that 'should it be decided that the existing sanctions should no longer be continued it was the view of His Majesty's Government that these assurances given by them should not end with the discontinuance of sanctions but should continue to cover the temporary period of uncertainty which might ensue'. So far as the present position in regard to the December undertakings given by His Majesty's Government is concerned, the position had thus been stated in these declarations: for the rest, the subject appeared to be largely one of academic interest on which His Majesty's Government would prefer to express no opinion.

In answer to Signor Vitetti's second question, namely, the reason for, and the purport of, the declarations in question, he was referred to the statement made by the Secretary of State at Geneva, that his declaration had been made with the object of removing certain preoccupations which might exist in the transitional period and that it was intended to operate only so long as in the opinion of His Majesty's Government it remained appropriate to the existing circumstances. Also in my House of Commons statement I said that these assurances were intended only to apply to the eventuality where the countries concerned had been attacked in consequence of action which they had taken under Article 16, and that I considered that this eventuality was not only hypothetical but improbable.

Thus the assurances given to Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece were intended as a contribution by His Majesty's Government towards re-establishing confidence in the regions concerned; they were unilateral and entirely spontaneous on the part of His Majesty's Government, and no corresponding assurances were asked from or given by the three Governments in question.

¹ No. 434.

² See No. 373, note 2.

³ No. 395.

Signor Vitetti said that he had already given Count Ciano some further explanations very much on these lines which he hoped would satisfy and reassure the Italian Government. The trouble had been that the Yugoslav Government, and more particularly the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs at Montreux,⁴ had been talking in a rash and exaggerated way about the effects of our declaration. They were in fact representing it to be a pact of a durable nature which they intended shortly to have registered with the League of Nations.

Repeated Montreux No. 2 Saving.

⁴ See Chapter VI below.

No. 438

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)

No. 843 [R 3922/226/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 11, 1936*

Sir,

The Italian Ambassador, who called on Sir R. Vansittart on July 2nd to say good-bye before departing to Rome, threw out various feelers which, without being positive in any direction, showed clearly how anxious he was that Anglo-Italian relations might soon resume, even if only by degrees, a rather more normal course.

2. Sir R. Vansittart told him that there was no use in endeavouring to hurry the course of events; indeed, any attempt to do so would defeat its own end; that feelings still ran high and even if they were to abate, time and patience were both necessary. Signor Grandi betrayed considerable anxiety at this answer and asked more specifically whether it would not be possible to look forward to the beginning of better things 'after October,' but Sir R. Vansittart deprecated any attempt to talk to time-tables. Signor Grandi's obvious anxiety to avoid delay is perhaps worth noting in the light of your telegram No. 427 of July 2nd,¹ in which you predict that, if His Majesty's Government were opposed to inviting Italy to be present at a meeting of the Locarno Powers, she would endeavour to reach an understanding with Germany. Sir R. Vansittart had no doubt that Signor Grandi was beginning to become anxious lest an Anglo-Italian rapprochement should be put out of court by an Italo-German rapprochement, or by some stroke in that direction on the part of Signor Mussolini, an interpretation which is to some extent confirmed by Sir Eric Phipps's telegram No. 166, Saving, of July 2nd² (repeated to Rome No. 224).

I am, &c.,

OWEN O'MALLEY
(for the Secretary of State)

¹ No. 398.

² No. 400.

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 12, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 450 Telegraphic [R 4131/294/67]

ROME, July 12, 1936, 3.35 a.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 241,¹ 243,² 246³ and 252.⁴

Minister for Foreign Affairs was unable to see me today⁵ before 7.15 p.m. when I told him that I was authorised to let him know that ships which had been detached from Home Fleet and Far Eastern Fleet for service in the Mediterranean were now returning to their normal stations. Ships and additional personnel which had also been sent from Home Stations were returning to the United Kingdom. I said that this constituted a very considerable reduction in our forces in the Mediterranean. I was to add that a substantial withdrawal of our Air reinforcements was also taking place. These movements spoke for themselves and they were surely conclusive answer to suspicions and misgivings against my country which still seemed to exist in Italy. He himself on July 9th⁶ had expressed his pleasure at the decision of my Government and had said that it would be welcomed by the Italian people and greatly help to restore cordial relations. I had naturally reported this to London, but unhappily I had seen no sign of appreciation or friendliness in the press. We really expected now to see change in the attitude of the Italian Government and of the Italian press towards us.

2. Count Ciano admitted that the line in press had not altered but he said that this was entirely due to continued existence of Mediterranean agreements. The Italian Government also felt strongly on this point. I replied that there seemed to me to have been misunderstanding on the part of the Italian Government about what were styled Mediterranean agreements. We had given the smaller Mediterranean Powers certain assurances before Italy invaded Abyssinia. During the course of the dispute these assurances assumed a mutual character but this mutuality had now disappeared and we had limited ourselves as had been made clear in the House of Commons to a declaration that we were prepared to come to the aid of those countries if they were attacked in revenge for the action they had taken. The Prime Minister stated on July 8th⁷ that His Majesty's Government regarded eventuality to which assurances were intended to apply not only as hypothetical but as improbable and the declaration was of a purely provisional character.

3. Count Ciano answered however this might be the declaration arose out of the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia and therefore was directed against Italy. He considered that it was essential in order to resume normal relations that all matters connected with the application of Article 16 of the Covenant should be finally settled. The French attitude on this point was perfectly logical and coincided with that of Italy. Why should Great Britain consider

¹ No. 425.

² No. 427.

³ No. 431.

⁴ No. 434.

⁵ i.e. July 11.

⁶ See No. 428.

⁷ See No. 434, note 3.

that Italy intended to attack the countries in question? Our declaration could only mean that we had such a suspicion.

4. I said that I wanted to make it perfectly clear that the declaration was unilateral. We had neither asked for nor received any corresponding assurances from any of the three Powers. He asked me why the declaration should continue. I would give him my personal views. He knew as well as I did that the smaller Mediterranean Powers were still somewhat nervous of his country. They felt that some revenge might be taken on them. On our side we felt it necessary to calm these apprehensions particularly as the Powers in question had been absolutely loyal to the League during the dispute. I could give him an absolute assurance that there were no bilateral arrangements.

5. His Excellency stated that he accepted this assurance but in view of Italian Government these arrangements ought to cease and resumption of normal relations in the Mediterranean depended on their coming to an end. I remarked that His Majesty's Government were perfectly entitled to make such a declaration of policy—the Covenant contemplated action of this nature—and I was not prepared to admit that Italy had any right to interfere with British policy. The statement he had made savoured to me of intimidation and he ought to know well enough that this was the last thing to which we would submit. Count Ciano hastily interrupted that he had no intention of suggesting what British policy should be or of interfering with it but our declaration had its origin in Italian-Abyssinian dispute and now that action taken under Article 16 had come to an end our declaration ought equally to cease. He asked me whether there was not any method of securing this.

6. I said that it was not easy in any way to change policy which had been openly proclaimed. Italy however might possibly facilitate things. For instance if she were able to give the three Powers in question solemn assurances that she had no intention of attacking them and that she wished for a normal situation in the Mediterranean then the position might be rendered easier for my Government. Count Ciano took note of this suggestion and seemed to appreciate it (I carefully made it as my own personal responsibility). Indeed he asked how I thought this could best be done; should he make a public declaration or speak to the press about it? I answered that this was his business but it seemed to me that such assurances might well be given through Italian diplomatic representatives at the three capitals. Count Ciano seemed to think this might be feasible but said that he would necessarily have to consult the head of the Government and his own experts. He asked whether if such assurances were given I could guarantee that our declaration would come to an end. I replied that I was not in a position to give him any such guarantee; all I could say was that the situation would be easier. I again emphasized that this was a question of policy and that each country was entitled to decide such a matter in accordance with its own sovereignty. For instance Italy had I understood given Austria a guarantee of assistance if she were attacked. What line would he take if I asked for a

withdrawal of this guarantee? Count Ciano did not deny the fact but stated that of course we were perfectly entitled to decide our own policy. He reverted however to his point that the present declaration was the result of the application of Article 16. There would be no reason why if once the present declaration had been abandoned we should not as a matter of policy make any arrangements we thought fit with the smaller Mediterranean Powers but he hoped himself that a general settlement of Mediterranean question could be evolved but he was convinced that it was both to Italian and British interests to work together in that sea.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 440

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 13, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 454 Telegraphic [C 5133/4/18]

ROME, July 12, 1936, 7.40 p.m.

My telegram 451.¹

I have received from Belgian Chargé d'Affaires exact text of Italian answer. I have already sent substance of it in my telegram under reference. No doubt you will receive full text from Monsieur van Zeeland. I would point out however that Belgian translation speaks of 'certains accords méditerranéens' while Italian words are 'taluni impegni' and are more properly translated as 'certain pledges.' The word could I understand from Minister for Foreign Affairs be applied to a unilateral declaration.

My French colleague after seeing Count Ciano yesterday evening and hearing from him the terms of the Italian reply received telegram from his government telling him to endeavour to persuade the Italian Government to secure favourable answer to Belgian invitation. He was to explain that French Government would be willing to agree to a rough formula by which it would be made clear that proposed meeting was solely of a preliminary character with the object of inviting Germany to come to a further conference within a given time.

My colleague asked me whether I thought such a step would now serve any useful purpose. I gave him general account of my conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and stated that my personal view was that there was practically no chance that Italy would now change her attitude which had already been announced in Italian press. Indeed I thought it would be mistake to press her to do so. I gather that however while he shares my opinion he feels that he may in view of his instructions have to make an effort on the above . . .²

Repeated to Paris and Brussels.

¹ No. 436.

² The text was here uncertain: 'lines' was suggested in a note on the filed copy.

No. 441

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Foreign Office (Received July 13, 6.15 p.m.)
No. 58 Telegraphic [C 5106/4/18]

BRUSSELS, July 13, 1936, 5 p.m.

My telegram 57.¹

Following is text of proposed *communiqué* regarding conference begins:

The French, British and Belgian Governments having taken note of reply of Italian Government to invitation which had been transmitted to it by Belgian Government as a result of the conversations which took place at Geneva, have decided to meet at Brussels on July 22nd in order to examine the present situation.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Berlin.

¹ In this telegram of July 13, despatched at 5.25 p.m., Sir E. Ovey forwarded the text of a written statement of the Belgian view that the Italian reply (cf. No. 436) about the proposed conference did not make it necessary to modify the dispositions regarding which the British, French, and Belgian Governments had notified their agreement at Geneva. The text of this communication is printed in *D.D.B., op. cit.*, No. 95.

No. 442

Sir E. Ovey (Brussels) to Foreign Office (Received July 13, 7.45 p.m.)
No. 59 Telegraphic [C 5107/4/18]

Important

BRUSSELS, July 13, 1936, 5.55 p.m.

In making the communication reported in my immediately preceding telegrams¹ Minister for Foreign Affairs gave me very definitely to understand that the French Government's assent was certain.

His Excellency also asked me to tell you that should His Majesty's Government for any reason prefer conference to be held anywhere else than in Brussels (I gather he meant London), Belgian Government would be entirely agreeable. His Government did not propose this change but asked me to make above communication to you.²

He was most anxious for earliest answer, if possible tomorrow.

Repeated Paris, Rome, and Berlin.

¹ No. 441 and *ibid.*, note 1.

² In his telegram No. 60 of July 16 to the Foreign Office Sir E. Ovey reported that the Belgian Foreign Office, while not attaching importance to Brussels as a place of meeting, did still attach importance to a meeting between British, French, and Belgian representatives to show that their unity was undisturbed and that they had 'no intention of bowing before moral blackmail on the part of Signor Mussolini'.

No. 443

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 14, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 456 Telegraphic [R 4230/294/67]

ROME, July 13, 1936, 8.55 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 174 Saving.¹

I have telegraphed fully about our Mediterranean declaration.² I do not think decision to increase our naval forces in the Mediterranean³ in future has caused any serious feeling here. The press telegrams from London have explained that we intend to reach the standard laid down in 1930 and the Minister for Foreign Affairs seems to consider this as perfectly reasonable. Indeed when I drew his attention in conversation to certain Italian press articles to the effect that relations between our two countries could not be normal until our Mediterranean forces had been reduced to what they were before the Abyssinian dispute he stated that these expressed purely personal views and indicated that he did not share them—please see in this connexion his conversation with Signor Mussolini on October 18th last (paragraph 5 of my telegram No. 637 of 1935).⁴

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ Of July 9, not printed. This reported Herr Dieckhoff as saying that Italy would not attend a conference because of His Majesty's Government's mutual assistance agreements and decision to increase naval forces in the Mediterranean.

² See No. 439.

³ Cf. No. 406.

⁴ Volume XV, No. 111.

No. 444

Foreign Office to Sir E. Drummond (Rome)
No. 256 Telegraphic [R 4131/294/67]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 13, 1936, 10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 450.¹

I approve your language. Declaration by Italian Government through the diplomatic channel to the three Powers on the lines you suggest in para[graph] 6 would certainly contribute to the easing of the present position and ought to be encouraged.

You will however appreciate that it is obviously impossible for His Majesty's Government to decide in advance on their reaction to any Italian declaration, until they are in a position to know what it is, and what effect it has if made in other questions.

¹ No. 439.

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office (Received July 14, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 458 Telegraphic [R 4163/294/67]

Important

ROME, July 13, 1936, midnight

My telegram 450¹ paragraph 6.

His Excellency asked me to call this evening and stated that he had been much struck by the suggestion I had put forward on July 11th that the situation might be eased if Italy saw her way to give assurances of her peaceful intentions to the 3 smaller Mediterranean Powers. He had decided to adopt this suggestion and had sent instructions to the Italian representatives in the 3 capitals to make a statement to the representative Governments to which they are accredited on the following lines: Italian policy would be one of peaceful reconstruction and would be conducted in a spirit of mutual collaboration and confidence for the future. As regards Turkey and Greece, the Ministers were to add that pacts of friendship already existed between Italy and the countries in question, and that Italy had never intended and did not intend to deviate from those pacts or to diminish their value. As regards Yugoslavia, the Minister at Belgrade was to state that Italy wished to continue and to develop relations of *bon voisinage*. These points were to be emphasised by the 3 Ministers in such a way as to show that Italy's intentions were in no way hostile to the countries in question; further, each Minister was to state that a similar communication had been addressed to the other 2 countries.

I felt bound to remind Count Ciano that my suggestion of July 11th had been purely personal and that I had been unable to give him any guarantee that assurances of this kind would lead to withdrawal of our declaration; but again, speaking personally, I felt convinced that the action he had taken would ease the situation. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said he appreciated this and he also realised that the 3 countries had been and still were fearful of the Italian intentions; he hoped that the statement now to be made would give them the necessary reassurance.

He then laid emphasis on his desire to get this question of our Mediterranean declaration out of the way in order that the normal friendly relations might be resumed between our 2 countries, a point to which he attached the greatest importance on general European grounds.

He said Signor Vitetti had been sent a copy of telegram to the representatives of the 3 Mediterranean Powers² and though he had no instructions to inform His Majesty's Government of its contents he would doubtless bring them to the notice of . . .³

¹ No. 439.

² See No. 473 below.

³ The text was here uncertain. In minutes on this telegram Mr. O'Malley suggested that British representatives in Belgrade, Athens, and Constantinople should report on the value of the British guarantee, but Sir R. Vansittart turned down this suggestion. He wrote: 'I wd. be rather inclined not to sound or consult at this stage. However tactfully it is done there may—indeed *will* be—be some risk in it, if, as I hope, we mean to continue purely

unilaterally. If the Italians have given, or give, sufficient assurances to these three powers, the way wd. be open for us to withdraw *our* assurances, & we shd. take it with regard only to our own interest and to European collaboration—which is what we are still trying to achieve, without much encouragement so far. R. V. July 15.'

No. 446

Foreign Office to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 1224 [C 5095/4/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 13, 1936

Sir,

The French Ambassador called upon Sir Robert Vansittart on the 10th July with regard to the terms of reference which we had proposed for the meeting of the Locarno Powers at Brussels.¹

2. M. Corbin said that his Government foresaw considerable difficulties in regard to the second item of the agenda, that is, the re-entry of Germany into the League. In view of the complications which lay ahead in that direction, his Government felt strongly that it would be unwise at present to be quite so precise in regard to the Brussels programme. Indeed the French Government very greatly preferred the *communiqué* of the 3rd July² which had been agreed upon by the three Governments at Geneva. M. Corbin said that this formula left open all possibilities, both for the invitation of Germany and for any other solution. He did not think that the German Government either could or would object to the use of any such general formula as the one which had been accepted at Geneva. Sir Robert Vansittart intervened here to say that this was possibly a rather optimistic estimate. M. Corbin, after mentioning that the Germans had made no sort of conciliatory move and had given no satisfaction of any kind since their action of the 7th March, said that his Government did not, of course, object to an invitation to Germany, but that they felt there must be adequate time for an exchange of views between the Locarno Powers before announcing such an invitation. He thought, moreover, that the position of Italy should be considered, and if we were as precise as was now proposed in the new formula he thought Italy would hesitate. He did not make it plain why he thought the new formula would render Italian collaboration less likely than the former one; but he said that the French Government felt it would be more difficult for Italy to refuse to attend if the Geneva formula were used. The French Government found difficulty in understanding why we were inclined to abandon that formula in favour of the one which we had now proposed.

3. Sir Robert Vansittart replied that our object in proposing such a programme was that matters had for some time been stagnating and that we really thought it was time to get a move on. M. Corbin replied that this would be a move backward. He did not think that the second meeting, that

¹ See No. 418.

² See No. 407.

is the meeting with Germany, should appear to be an obligation so much as a consequence. Our present programme would certainly, in the eyes of the French Government, have the appearance of rushing a fence. Moreover, M. Corbin himself was convinced that we should also have the appearance of running too much after Germany, and he thought that this was the last way to get good results out of her and would only cause her to recede rather more.

4. Sir Robert Vansittart said that he would, of course, give a full account to His Majesty's Government of all that M. Corbin had said, but he added that, in order to make quite sure that he was correctly interpreting the nuances of His Excellency's communication, he would be better pleased if M. Corbin would let him have an aide-mémoire on the subject in his own words. This M. Corbin promised to do, and Sir Robert Vansittart said that he would use the notes that he had taken as he was speaking as a commentary on his document.

5. Sir Robert Vansittart received to-day a note from the French Ambassador, a copy of which is enclosed as an annex to this despatch.

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

ENCLOSURE IN No. 446

M. Corbin to Sir R. Vansittart

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, LONDRES, le 10 juillet 1936

Cher Sir Robert,

D'après les indications que le Gouvernement belge a communiquées au Gouvernement français, le Gouvernement britannique, désireux d'éviter que l'Allemagne ne puisse interpréter la réunion préalable des quatre Puissances à Bruxelles comme ayant pour effet de la mettre en présence d'un programme unique concerté à l'avance, estime nécessaire de déclarer dès l'abord que la réunion projetée a pour but de décider d'inviter le Reich à une conférence destinée à rechercher l'amélioration de la situation internationale, l'élaboration d'un pacte occidental d'assistance et la rentrée de l'Allemagne dans la Société des Nations.

Aux yeux du Gouvernement français, et sans préjuger aucunement de la participation de l'Allemagne à une conférence ultérieure, il y aurait de graves inconvénients à procéder de la sorte. Le 12 mai dernier,³ en effet, les représentants belge, britannique et français, réunis à Genève, ont constaté que la réponse du Reich au questionnaire n'était pas encore parvenue, et décidé qu'après son arrivée, il y aurait lieu pour eux de procéder sans délai à un échange de vues. D'autre part, le *communiqué* du 3 juillet a annoncé 'une nouvelle réunion des Puissances signataires de Locarno dont les représentants ont participé à Londres à l'élaboration de l'arrangement du 19 mars pour examiner la situation actuelle.'

³ Cf. No. 320.

Cette formule d'ordre général présente l'avantage de permettre qu'une invitation soit adressée à l'Allemagne, si les Puissances le jugent opportun. Le Gouvernement du Reich, de son côté, ne saurait prendre ombrage d'une telle réunion toute naturelle pour l'examen de la réponse au questionnaire, si celle-ci est parvenue; non moins naturelle, si l'Allemagne, en s'abstenant de répondre, met les mauvais procédés de son côté.

Il ne faut pas oublier que, depuis le 7 mars, l'Allemagne n'a donné satisfaction à aucune des légitimes demandes des Gouvernements lésés par son geste; lui annoncer dès maintenant qu'elle sera invitée à la conférence équivaldrait, pratiquement, à reconnaître le succès définitif de la méthode du fait accompli. Les délégués allemands finiraient par arriver à Bruxelles en même temps que les représentants des Puissances, et avant que ceux-ci aient pu procéder, au préalable, à d'indispensables échanges de vue. D'autre part, si la formule britannique était adoptée, on ne verrait guère l'utilité de la conférence préalable prévue par le *communiqué* du 3 juillet. En outre, ce serait offrir au Gouvernement italien des raisons d'opportunité pour esquiver la réunion. Or, celle-ci doit donner au Gouvernement français comme au Gouvernement belge l'occasion de demander à l'Italie de se prononcer formellement quant à la persistance des garanties de Locarno, vis-à-vis desquelles elle s'est abstenue jusqu'ici de prendre une position nette en tirant prétexte des sanctions.

Le Gouvernement français éprouve d'autant plus de surprise de la communication transmise par l'Ambassadeur d'Angleterre à Bruxelles que Mr. Eden lui-même, dans les conversations tenues il y a quelques jours, à Genève, avec M. Yvon Delbos et avec les membres de la délégation française, s'est toujours montré pleinement d'accord sur la nécessité de conserver encore à la prochaine réunion le caractère d'une conférence des quatre Puissances demeurées fidèles aux accords de Locarno.

Croyez, &c.,
A. C. CORBIN

No. 447

Note¹ by Lord Halifax²

[C 5052/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 13, 1936*

I circulate to my colleagues a memorandum which had in the main been prepared in the Foreign Office³ before the signature of the Austro-German Agreement.⁴ Its conclusions, however, are of interest, because in some respects they affect the views set forth in F.P. (36) 5,⁵ in regard to the reform

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as F.P. (36)6.

² Cf. No. 423, note 1.

³ By Mr. O. G. Sargent and Mr. R. F. Wigram.

⁴ Cf. No. 436, note 4.

⁵ Not printed.

of the League. I am therefore circulating the two simultaneously. I have not had time fully to consider the implications of either document, but I think it is of importance that their circulation should not be delayed, since much consideration will be required before we are in a position to reach conclusions.

ANNEX TO No. 447

Memorandum on the proposed meeting of Locarno Powers

The following *communiqué* was issued at Geneva on the 3rd July:⁶

‘As a result of the conversations at Geneva between M. Blum, M. Delbos, Mr. Eden, M. van Zeeland and M. Spaak, it was agreed that a further meeting of the Locarno Powers whose representatives drew up the London arrangements of the 19th March would be desirable at an early date in order to discuss the present situation. No final decision was arrived at as to time or place of the meeting, but it was agreed that the invitation should be issued by M. van Zeeland after a further consultation with those concerned.’

A. History of Recent Developments

2. On the 19th March the ‘Text of Proposals’ was agreed in London by the representatives of the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Italy.⁷ That agreement covered, first, an invitation to Germany to refer to the Hague Court the question of the compatibility of the Franco-Soviet Treaty with the Treaty of Locarno, and to agree to certain temporary restrictions in the Rhineland for the period of the negotiations designed to secure a European settlement on the basis of the disappearance of the demilitarised zone. If Germany gave satisfaction on these two matters the Powers would agree to the general negotiations. These were to aim at the establishment of certain permanent restrictions in the Rhineland, regarding particularly fortifications. There was to be a western security arrangement, including non-aggression pacts between France and Belgium (and possibly Holland) and Germany, mutual assistance pacts open to all the signatories of Locarno, and an air pact. An international conference was to be summoned under the League of Nations to organise the system of collective security and the conditions of the application of article 16, to negotiate agreements regarding armaments limitation and economic matters, as well as non-aggression treaties between Germany and her north-eastern and south-eastern neighbours. Finally, it was laid down that if this ‘effort of conciliation should fail’, the four Powers would consider together ‘the new situation thus created,’ that the British and Italian Governments would ‘come to the assistance’ of the French and Belgian Governments ‘in accordance with the Treaty of Locarno in respect of any measures which shall be jointly decided upon’, and that, in return for

⁶ See No. 407.

⁷ See No. 144.

'reciprocal assurances,' those two Governments 'will take all measures available for the purpose of ensuring the security against unprovoked aggression' of France and Belgium, including the establishment or continuance of Staff conversations. Letters to this effect were exchanged between the British, French and Belgian Governments on the 1st April.⁸

3. On the 31st March the German Government refused to agree to the reference to The Hague Court, and, except under impracticable conditions, to the temporary restrictions in the Rhineland.⁹ As regards the general settlement, however, the proposals for a western security pact were developed, and it was suggested that this arrangement and the non-aggression pacts with Germany's north-eastern and south-eastern neighbours should be negotiated during a period of four months running from the 1st April as well, apparently, as the re-entry of Germany into the League of Nations, subject to the clearing up 'within a reasonable time' of the questions of colonial equality of rights and the separation of the Covenant from the Treaty of Versailles. The German Government thought that the proposals as regards armaments limitation, economic agreements, &c., could be dealt with at a later stage.¹⁰

4. The German refusal to agree to the reference to The Hague Court and the temporary restrictions in the Rhineland implied that, under the 'Text of Proposals,' the necessary preliminary condition for the opening of the general negotiation was absent. These were the circumstances in which, when the four Locarno Powers met in Geneva in April, the French claimed that 'the effort of conciliation' had failed and that consultations ought to begin, in accordance with the letters of the 1st April, to examine 'the steps to be taken to meet the new situation thus created.' They agreed, however, to a proposal by the Foreign Secretary that the British Government should try to elucidate with the German Government 'a number of points in the German memorandum, and in particular the meaning attached by the German Government to the bilateral treaties (of non-aggression) and how these treaties would be incorporated within the framework of collective security or mutual assistance provided for in the Covenant of the League.'¹¹ The special emphasis laid upon the non-aggression treaties and their relation to the Covenant was due to the fact that the German refusal of the temporary restrictions in the Rhineland showed that they intended to fortify it. The French therefore wanted 'compensation' for this fortification, which would make it infinitely more difficult for them to go to the help of the Central European Powers if threatened by Germany.

5. At the moment, then, the position is that, under the 'Text of Proposals,' we are, in view of the German refusal of the reference to The Hague Court and the temporary restrictions in the Rhineland, debarred from claiming the opening of the general negotiations. Our effort (the Questionnaire of the 6th May)¹² to draw from the Germans some statement as to their intentions in Central Europe, in order to enable the French to acquiesce in the German

⁸ See No. 199, Enclosures 1 and 2.

⁹ Cf. No. 193, note 2.

¹⁰ Cf. No. 193.

¹¹ Cf. Nos. 223 and 227.

¹² See No. 307.

refusal of the temporary restrictions in the Rhineland, and therefore, by implication, the German intention to fortify it, has so far failed.

B. *The Future*

6. Ever since the formation of the National Government in 1931, and long before that date, it has been the consistent and explicit policy of His Majesty's Government to work for a complete settlement in Europe in order to cover all the danger spots. As lately as the 18th June, 1936, the Foreign Secretary said: 'Nothing less than European settlement and appeasement should be our aim.'¹³ As recently, too, as the 6th May last we stated in our questionnaire to Germany that it was our desire to co-operate with her in the promotion of 'the great work of securing European peace,' and we emphasised 'the importance which His Majesty's Government attach to the establishment in Europe of a real and lasting peace based on the recognition of the equality of rights and independence of every State, together with respect by every State for the engagements entered into by it.'

7. If it is decided to continue the attempt to secure a *general European settlement*, a preliminary condition of any progress is agreement by the Four Powers to waive the obstacle to the opening of the general negotiations constituted, under the 'Text of Proposals,' by Germany's refusal of the reference to The Hague Court and of temporary restrictions in the Rhineland. On the assumption that that is agreed, there might either be a return to the 'Text of Proposals,' or to the modification of that procedure apparently contemplated in Geneva in April and in our Questionnaire of the 6th May.

8. The 'Text of Proposals' provided for permanent restrictions on the fortification of the Rhineland, a western security arrangement, and an international conference under the League of Nations to organise collective security, to negotiate agreements regarding armaments limitation and economic matters, and non-aggression treaties between Germany and her north-eastern and south-eastern neighbours. Herr Hitler has made it so clear to Sir E. Phipps that he will have nothing to do with any limitation of German fortifications in the Rhineland which is not accompanied by reciprocal restrictions in French and Belgian territory, that, for this reason alone, resort to the 'Text of Proposals' seems impossible. This is evidently M. van Zeeland's view. Moreover, under existing conditions the assembly of an international conference to 'organise collective security' and negotiate agreements on armaments and economic matters seems unlikely to help anyone.

9. The procedure contemplated in the Questionnaire also bristles with difficulties. This procedure implied the negotiation of a western security arrangement, supplemented by an air *limitation* agreement, and the simultaneous negotiation of the Central European non-aggression treaties in conformity with the Covenant of the League of Nations which Germany would re-enter.

10. The initiation of any general negotiations with Germany would be likely, in Germany's present mood, to result in our being presented in an

¹³ Cf. No. 373, note 2.

acute form with a series of definite and embarrassing demands. In any case great difficulties are likely to arise in any negotiations respecting air limitation, owing to the German view of the Franco-Soviet and Czech-Soviet Pacts. The non-aggression pacts offered by Germany in Eastern and Central Europe would moreover, if they were to have real value for the restoration of confidence, have

- (1) to be extended to Russia and the Baltic States;
- (2) to be guaranteed by some third party;
- (3) at any rate in the case not only of Austria but also of Czechoslovakia, to provide specifically for non-interference as well as non-aggression;
- (4) to leave to the other party full liberty to go to war with Germany under article 16 of the Covenant.

It is most unlikely that Germany would agree to such conditions.

11. As regards the League, it is improbable that Germany would re-enter it in the present uncertainty which surrounds the future of the Covenant and of the principle of collective security. Germany would probably require the total suppression of articles 10 and 16, and would resist any attempt to embody a series of regional pacts in the League system. Moreover, we have as yet not faced at all the major difficulty of how to deal with Germany's colonial claim, which will be put forward officially either as a preliminary or else as soon as Germany has returned to the League. As explained earlier in this memorandum, she has made it clear that, if she returns to the League, she expects the 'clearing up within a reasonable time' of the question of colonial equality of rights. And the German agreement with Austria now makes it probable that the colonial question will assume a higher place on her list of desiderata. A clear and immediate declaration by His Majesty's Government that they will not either now or in the future agree to the surrender of colonies would thus not improbably be answered by Germany withdrawing her offer to join the League. On the other hand, silence on the part of His Majesty's Government would be tantamount to saying that we were ready to discuss the retrocession of German ex-colonies. Finally, the fact must be realised that even though Germany, on re-entering the League, gave guarantees of her 'sincere intention to observe her international obligations' (paragraph 2 of article 1 of the Covenant), no one would be likely to have any great confidence that, so far as Central and Eastern Europe are concerned, she would observe them; for the temporary settlement of Austro-German friction is not likely to allay but to increase anxiety in other quarters. The re-entry of Germany into the League would not, therefore, *in itself* contribute materially to the restoration of confidence in Europe.

12. Thus, if any further attempt is made to bring Germany into a general settlement, it would seem probable on the whole that the negotiation will fail. We should then be faced with (a result which seems almost certain in any case) a French and Belgian demand for the execution of our obligations under the letters of the 1st April. That demand, to the satisfaction of which under such conditions we should be committed by the terms of the 'Text of

Proposals' and the letters, would imply the coming into being of a defensive alliance between this country, France and Belgium against Germany, although this fact might be made capable of more conciliatory presentation, by leaving the arrangement open for the adherence of Germany.

13. But it does not seem that because of the likelihood of failure we should abandon the attempt to open the negotiation. Abandonment would involve the humiliating withdrawal of our questionnaire—a very heavy diplomatic defeat, that would greatly lower our prestige—and an intimation to Germany and Europe generally that we were no longer interested in improving and giving effect to the offers made by Germany herself on the 31st March for stabilising the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. This would seem inexplicable to the world at large.

14. Moreover, any such open abandonment of a policy so long pursued by His Majesty's Government would be regarded throughout Europe as a striking indication of our weakness, and a fresh humiliation following so rapidly on that to which the Italo-Abyssinian dispute has unfairly but undeniably exposed us. German moves in Central and Eastern Europe would certainly be expedited, and German demands in those regions might be increased. France would consider herself betrayed and, like Russia and the Little Entente, would greatly resent the intensification of the dangers of the European situation for which she would consider us to be responsible. We should, in fact, be left without any effective friends in Europe. We should have no guarantee at all that Germany would be particularly grateful to us for our action; indeed, it would be in accordance with her tradition to use it as the basis for fresh demands, from which we should not be exempt, and even, to exploit it against us with the other great European Powers.

15. It may well be that the development of events will make it impossible for us to resist German designs in Central and Eastern Europe; but that is no reason why there should be any spectacular or sudden abandonment of the policy which we have, up till now, consistently pursued. We surely cannot afford such a somersault. We cannot foretell the future, and though much may now seem certain, we have no guarantee that the situation in those regions will develop as we expect. How do we know that Germany will not become involved there in great difficulties with Russia or Poland? Wisdom suggests that where so much is uncertain it would be wise to play a waiting game.

16. The natural way to do this would be to continue the negotiation upon the basis of the whole of the German Plan of the 31st March, and to abstain, meanwhile, from openly embarking on any course of action which would indicate that we were disinteresting ourselves from the problems of Eastern and Central Europe. It is quite probable that a general European settlement has, with the increase of the power of Germany, become unobtainable in Eastern and Central Europe, for Germany's attitude and known designs are such that it is difficult to see what undertakings she could give which would re-establish confidence. But it is surely better that the breakdown of this policy of a general settlement should be clearly laid at the door of Germany

and not attributed to the eleventh-hour default or perfidy of His Majesty's Government?

17. The only conceivable reason for the sudden abandonment of our oft-proclaimed policy of general settlement would be that this abandonment would secure a definite and immediate advantage to this country—a national advantage so great as to outweigh the international disadvantages indicated above, and to silence criticism at home, if not abroad.

18. The alleged advantages from an immediate agreement confined to the West are presumably threefold:

- (a) Great Britain might limit her commitments to an essential British interest.
- (b) She might obtain increased security against a direct attack by Germany on this country.
- (c) She might create a *détente* with Germany, and thus decrease tension in Europe generally.

19. These advantages are more apparent than real; in fact, they are at this stage illusory. As regards (a), there is no reason whatever why a general settlement should increase our commitments in the rest of Europe; and, equally, there is no reason why a Western Agreement should, in fact, reduce them. Our commitments in Europe will, in the last resort, be governed by the fundamental responsibilities and dangers to which this country is bound to be exposed so long as it remains a world Power with commitments and interests in every part of the world.

20. As regards the increased security which a Western Pact would give to this country, it must be remembered that in concentrating on the West we will be dealing with what may be said to be one of the few parts of Europe which is probably not an immediate danger spot—unless the colonial question becomes No. 1 instead of No. 2 or No. 3 on Hitler's list—while leaving untouched all the real danger spots, from which the flame might spread West. It is doubtful, therefore, whether such an arrangement is likely in itself to add any assurance of general peace.

21. Besides this, the actual operation of a new Locarno might, as a matter of fact, reduce our security, if Germany were to insist, in such a new Locarno, on our ceasing the Anglo-Belgian and Anglo-French Staff conversations, which are, in fact, some concrete contribution towards the increase of British security.

22. But the primary, and probably insuperable, objection to this proposal will almost certainly be the French attitude. In view of their Central European and particularly Russian commitments, it is difficult to see how the French could agree to a settlement with Germany which left her a free hand in Eastern and Central Europe. The Right might just conceivably stand for the idea, if we would give them adequate Staff arrangements; but would such arrangements be accepted by Germany? As regards the Left, it is difficult to see how M. Blum could negotiate on such lines and survive. Nor would our Left be silent.

23. As regards the establishment of a *détente* with Germany, thereby contributing towards the decrease of tension in Europe generally, it is certain that, if Great Britain were openly to dissociate herself henceforth from the affairs of Central and Eastern Europe, the effect, far from relieving, would increase the tension in Europe generally; and the fact that this dissociation had been accompanied by a *détente* between this Country and Germany would certainly do nothing to lessen this effect. But, even so, is a *détente* with Germany possible on this basis? This country has only two points of disagreement with Germany, namely, (a) we suspect and disapprove of her policy of expansion in Eastern and Central Europe, and (b) she wants us to give back her colonies. Even assuming that for the sake of an agreement with Germany we abandoned our position as regards (a), we shall be no nearer a *détente* with Germany until we have taken a further step in abnegation by agreeing to the retrocession of her colonies. Even so, it might be argued that the objective of a final settlement would not be attained. But what is certain is that, if we are not prepared to make this further and direct sacrifice, even with a new Locarno, our relations with Germany will still remain strained and may well continue to deteriorate to a point so critical that we shall regret the sacrifice of our former principles and associates, for the sacrifice will have been vain. We should, in fact, have been endeavouring to pursue two wholly opposite lines of policy, with results eventually fatal to ourselves.

24. M. van Zeeland has proposed that the objectives to be aimed at in negotiating with Germany should be simplified and should, in fact, be limited to inviting Germany (1) to negotiate with the other four Locarno Powers a new Locarno Treaty; and (2) to return to the League.¹⁴ Such an approach might, in practice, be subsequently elaborated into either a General European Settlement or limited to a Western Arrangement. This being so, it will be highly desirable, if misunderstandings and recriminations are to be avoided, that it should be clearly understood beforehand how the three Western Powers intend to interpret and apply M. van Zeeland's proposal, and in making their choice His Majesty's Government will do well to bear in mind the various considerations set forth in this present memorandum.

¹⁴ See No. 403.

Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople) to Foreign Office
(Received July 14, 10.20 a.m.)

No. 59 Telegraphic [R 4192/294/67]

Immediate

CONSTANTINOPLE, July 14, 1936, 3.30 a.m.

Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs having arrived from Angora . . .¹ asked me to see him late yesterday evening and gave me the following chronicle of events.

1. On July 10th in the morning Minister for Foreign Affairs received a note in Angora from Italian Embassy pointing out that as sanctions were to cease on July 15th and as Italian-Turkish commercial agreement lapsed, failing renewal, on July 20th, Italian Government suggested that agreement should be provisionally renewed for three months in order to allow time for negotiation of a fresh one.

2. In the afternoon of the same day a secretary of Italian Embassy handed an official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs another communication asking, in view of the lapse of sanctions, what opinion the Turkish Government held in regard to the continuance or otherwise of assurances which Turkey had exchanged with His Majesty's Government in December last² and suggesting that they ought likewise to lapse.

A prompt reply was requested.

3. In the evening Italian Embassy requested the cancellation of its note about commercial treaty (see paragraph 1) and Turkish Government agreed.

4. Later in the same evening a Greek representative called on Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs who told him of Italian development mentioned in paragraph 2 above and of action on it which Turkish Government intended to take (see next paragraph). Greek representative said he had no knowledge of these circumstances.

5. During the night of July 10th-July 11th Turkish Government telegraphed to their representatives in London,³ Belgrade and Athens requesting them to acquaint the governments to which they were accredited with Italian communication regarding the Mediterranean assurances, to say that in the view of the Turkish Government answer should be to the effect that assurances . . .¹ binding until their termination was agreed on between the parties concerned and requesting the views of the three interested governments.

6. At 9 a.m. on July 12th the Greek representative asked for interview with Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs who received him at about midday. Former stated that Greek Government had meanwhile received similar communication from Italian Government and intended to reply that in their view Mediterranean assurances which the Greek Government had exchanged with His Majesty's Government had lapsed. Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs inferred that Greek Government had already replied in this sense to

¹ The text was here uncertain.

² Cf. Volume XV, Nos. 339 and 340.

³ Cf. No. 452 below.

Rome: he did not comment at length but expressed regret that termination of these assurances should not have been on the part of the Greek Government the subject of the same process of mutual consultation between the Balkan Entente partners as their giving had been.

7. During the week-end⁴ London replied, without saying whether similar Italian communication had been received there, that an answer would be returned to Turkish enquiry on July 13th. Belgrade replied that, in the same way as the Turkish Government, they had telegraphed, on the receipt of similar Italian communication to consult London and Athens and that they awaited the replies.

8. In the late afternoon of July 13th Italian Ambassador called on Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in Constantinople and expressed astonishment and regret at the delay of Turkish Government in replying. Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, without repeating the views which Turkish Government had themselves expressed informed him frankly of consultations undertaken (see paragraph 5) and of the statement since made to him by Greek Legation (see paragraph 6) adding that final replies from London, Belgrade and Athens must be awaited. Italian Ambassador said that reply of Yugoslav Government was not a matter of great moment but that Italian Government attached great importance to that of Turkey. As regards London he could inform Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs *that Italian Government had already received reply from His Majesty's Government in the sense that the latter regarded the Mediterranean assurances as having lapsed.*

See my immediately following telegram.⁵

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Rome and Bucharest.

⁴ A note on the filed copy suggests the insertion of the words 'Turkish Embassy in' at this point.

⁵ No. 449 below.

No. 449

Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople) to Foreign Office
(Received July 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 60 Telegraphic [R 4164/294/67]

Immediate

CONSTANTINOPLE, July 14, 1936, 3.30 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

In view of your statement to House of Commons on June 18th² regarding continuance of Mediterranean assurances after sanctions were raised and your subsequent detailed explanation of your views to Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs (see your telegram No. 77³ from Geneva to Foreign Office) I assume statement of Italian Ambassador quoted in paragraph 8 of my telegram under reference is an impudent and mischievous fabrication. Please

¹ No. 448.

² See No. 373, note 2.

³ No. 389.

see also my telegram No. 3 to Geneva⁴ paragraph 2(b) and (c); and my telegram No. 5 to Geneva⁵ end of first paragraph, from which you will have appreciated Turkish view, uncontested by me and I believe shared by you, that assurances reciprocally given can only be terminated by mutual agreement.

If Italian Ambassador's statement is unfounded I beg you, apart from reply to Turkish enquiry which you presumably communicated yesterday to Turkish Embassy, to enable me *with the least possible delay* to nail the lie to the counter.

The matter is obviously one of basic and vital importance to our relations with Turkey.

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Rome and Bucharest by post.

⁴ No. 391.

⁵ No. 410.

No. 450

Mr. Walker¹ (Athens) to Mr. Eden (Received July 15, 6 p.m.)

No. 144 Telegraphic [R 4243/294/67]

ATHENS, July 15, 1936, 5.55 p.m.

On the receipt of Angora telegram No. 159² I asked the head of political Department at Ministry of Foreign Affairs what action the Greek Government had taken. He told me on the morning of July 11th Italian Chargé d'Affaires asked Ministry of Foreign Affairs whether the Greek Government proposed to consider the Mediterranean assurances as still in force after the termination of sanctions and requested a reply the same evening. Greek Government decided to reply that in their view assurances automatically lapsed with the raising of sanctions and they instructed their representatives in London, Angora and Belgrade to inform respective Governments accordingly. Reply in this sense was in fact delivered to Chargé d'Affaires on the same evening and repeated in Rome.

I expressed surprise at the way in which the Greek Government had presented His Majesty's Government with a *fait accompli*. Argument that to maintain assurances after the raising of sanctions would involve a breach [*sic*] of Italian Greek Treaty of Friendship was, I said, irrelevant since between Italian *démarche* and actual raising of sanctions there was plenty of time for consultation with us.

Repeated to Angora, Belgrade and Bucharest by post.

¹ Mr. E. A. Walker was Chargé d'Affaires at Athens.

² The reference is evidently to Sir P. Loraine's telegram No. 59: see No. 448.

No. 451

Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople)

No. 139 Telegraphic [R 4164/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 15, 1936, 8 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 59¹ and 60². Following from Sir R. Vansittart.

My telegram to Rome No. 253³ will show you the lines on which the Italian enquiry was answered. I hope tomorrow to be able to telegraph to you the text of the reply which will have been returned to the enquiry by the Turkish Embassy.⁴ Owing to the absence of the Secretary of State it was not possible to give an answer on the 13th.

As recognised by the Turkish Prime Minister (see your telegram No. 3 to Geneva),⁵ the Secretary of State's declaration of June 18th and July 1st⁶ leaves His Majesty's Government the sole arbiter as to when the assurances contained in this declaration shall lapse.

As for the assurance given by Turkey to Great Britain in December, it will be seen from the reply returned to the Italian Embassy that His Majesty's Government consider the matter in present circumstances one largely of academic interest on which they would prefer to express no opinion.

Reports have reached me that M. Aras has stated to both the French and Italians that there is a binding and continuing agreement for mutual assistance between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government. This is not the view of His Majesty's Government. The assurances exchanged between our two Governments in December were to meet the particular risks to which the parties were exposed by reason of their joint participation in sanctions, and it was never contemplated that these assurances should continue in force indefinitely until the two Governments agreed to cancel them; nor is there anything in the Secretary of State's unilateral declaration of June 18th and July 1st to warrant this interpretation.

¹ No. 448.

² No. 449.

³ No. 437.

⁴ See No. 448, paragraph 5, and No. 452 below.

⁵ No. 391.

⁶ See No. 373, note 2, and No. 395.

No. 452

Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine (Angora)

No. 140 Telegraphic [R 4248/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 15, 1936, 8 p.m.*

Your telegram[s] Nos. 59¹ and 60.²

On July 11th Turkish Chargé d'Affaires communicated an Aide-Mémoire³ to the effect that Italian Government had enquired of Turkish Government

¹ No. 448.

² No. 449.

³ Not printed.

whether mutual assistance undertakings exchanged in December between Turkish Government and His Majesty's Government were considered still valid by Turkish Government after decision to end sanctions had been taken. Aide-Mémoire stated that Turkish Government proposed to reply that so long as undertakings are not cancelled by agreement between the two contracting parties they will naturally continue to be valid and enquired whether His Majesty's Government agreed with this view.

Monsieur Örs has been informed of the similar enquiry made by Italian Chargé d'Affaires on July 9th, and of the reply returned to Signor Vitetti as given in my telegram No. 253⁴ to Rome.

The hope was expressed to him that the above explanation would make clear His Majesty's Government's view regarding the scope and effect of my declarations which, unlike the mutual undertakings exchanged between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government in December last, did not in any way represent an agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government, but constituted a purely unilateral action by His Majesty's Government who, by the very nature of the declarations, remained sole judges as to the duration of the period during which they may remain appropriate to existing circumstances.

⁴ No. 437. The Foreign Office letter of July 15, replying to M. Örs after being approved by Mr. Eden, is filed under R 4248/294/67, and is not printed here. It was identical, *mutatis mutandis*, with paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 of No. 437.

No. 453

Sir G. Clerk (Paris) to Mr. Eden (Received July 16, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 194 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5167/4/18]

PARIS, July 15, 1936

Your despatch No. 1224.¹

While I was with Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon M. Corbin telephoned to him on account of his conversation with Sir R. Vansittart this morning.² I gathered that Sir Robert had not been able to communicate any definite decision as to the meeting on July 22nd, as the Cabinet was still sitting,³ but M. Delbos impressed upon M. Corbin the importance attached by the French Government to such a meeting, especially since the Austro-German Agreement of July 11th,⁴ for otherwise French public opinion, and indeed public opinion in the world at large, might tend to consider that the initiative of European policy had definitely passed from the two great democracies into the hands of the two dictators. M. Delbos said that what I heard him telephone to M. Corbin was what he would have said to me.

2. President of the Council, whom I saw subsequently, held much the same language. He said that the Austro-German Agreement meant that

¹ No. 446.

³ See No. 454, note 2, below.

² Cf. No. 455 below.

⁴ See No. 436, note 4.

what had been a ditch dividing Germany and Italy was now a bridge, on which I observed that a buffer State was never a very comfortable bridge. M. Blum replied that that might be true, but none the less Germany and Italy had undoubtedly come much closer together and there was no saying what might be the next surprise that would be sprung upon us. He therefore attached the greatest importance to the proposed meeting at Brussels and he [u]rgently hoped that His Majesty's Government would agree to it.

No. 454

Conclusions of the second meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy held in the Prime Minister's room, House of Commons, on July 15, 1936, at 5 p.m.
F.P. (36) [C 5417/4/18]

PRESENT: Mr. S. Baldwin (*in the Chair*), Mr. J. R. MacDonald, Mr. N. Chamberlain, Sir J. Simon, Mr. A. Eden, Lord Halifax, Mr. W. Ormsby-Gore, Sir S. Hoare, Sir T. Inskip, Sir M. P. A. Hankey (Secretary).

The Committee met as a sequel to a preliminary discussion of the subject mentioned in the margin at the Meeting of the Cabinet that morning.¹

MR. EDEN said that while the Cabinet was sitting the French Ambassador had called on Sir Robert Vansittart.² He had nothing much new to say. The French Government wanted the Brussels Meeting to take place. The Ambassador pointed out that we had agreed to it at Geneva: that at that time Italy had been one of the embarrassing factors: and that we could hardly argue against the Meeting now because Italy would not be present. If we feared the result of the Meeting would be to draw Italy and Germany more closely together, he understood that we were still maintaining our guarantee to Eastern Mediterranean Powers, which had precisely that effect. Mr. Eden himself would like the Meeting to be held, but preferably in London,³ provided that we could agree beforehand on the precise object of the Meeting and, if possible, the general lines of the *communiqué* to be issued thereafter. He was inclined to reply that we did not much like the idea of holding a meeting

¹ At this meeting Lord Halifax had explained that on the previous day, when he was still in temporary charge of the Foreign Office in the absence of Mr. Eden, he had consulted the Foreign Office and found that on the whole it was in favour of a postponement of the Brussels Conference. 'They thought that to hold the Conference after Italy's refusal, and at a time when the German Government was saying that no business could be done before October, would only tend to emphasise the division of Europe into camps.' Mr. Eden, however, 'inclined to the view that the Brussels Meeting should be held, in order to show Europe that the Western democracies had views of their own and would like to make contribution to a European settlement.' After a brief discussion it was agreed that in view of the urgency of a decision the Foreign Policy Committee of the Cabinet should meet at 5 p.m. and that the Cabinet should meet on the following day, July 16, at 10.45 a.m. to receive the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee; see note 8 below.

² See No. 455 below.

³ Cf. No. 442.

in present circumstances, and could only agree if its objects were specified and the general line of the *communiqué* to be issued thereafter determined beforehand. He then handed round a draft of a *communiqué*.⁴

In the course of the discussion it was represented that a meeting was desirable, for the following reasons:

- (1) That it was dangerous to leave everything uncertain;
- (2) That it would be represented as a failure of leadership on our part;
- (3) That no-one could foretell what Italy and Germany would be doing in the interval;
- (4) That a Meeting would add something to the prestige of the present weak French Government and perhaps help to prolong its existence. This was an advantage, because on the whole its attitude towards Germany was more reasonable than that of any recent French Government. Moreover, the German desire for postponement until October was possibly connected with uncertainty as to the French Government.

At the same time it was generally agreed that something must be done to avoid the danger that the Meeting would be interpreted as a move towards the encirclement of Germany.

It was suggested, therefore, that the three Powers should agree on the terms not only of a *communiqué* to be issued after the Meeting, but also one to be issued before. The Belgian draft *communiqué* contained in Brussels telegram No. 58,⁵ which gave the object of the Meeting as 'To examine the present situation', was not considered adequate or safe. Read in conjunction with the preceding telegram from Brussels, No. 57,⁶ which gave the Belgian point of view, this *communiqué* was criticised as harking back to the Belgian point of view as set forth in telegram No. 89,⁷ of July 1st, from Geneva (Cabinet 48(36) Appendix), certain phrases in which had been the subject of adverse comment at the Cabinet (e.g., 'placing Germany on the defensive').

MR. EDEN explained that the phrases in question did not really give the tenor of M. van Zeeland's idea, which was simply to make a fresh start.

The question was asked as to why the draft *communiqué* submitted by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs divided the subject into two phases; first, the construction of a new Locarno Agreement, and, second, 'If progress could be made under this head', other matters affecting European peace.

MR. EDEN explained that the reason was that he did not wish the Locarno settlement to be lost owing to the spreading of the discussion over the wider settlement, where difficulties might be met. He emphasised that at the proposed Conference of the three Powers it was not intended to discuss the machinery of the new Locarno Agreement, the object being to secure a joint invitation to a Five-Power Conference to be attended by Germany and Italy as well as France, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

The suggestion was made that for the three Powers to come together simply to invite Germany and Italy to a new Conference might be regarded as

⁴ Not printed.

⁵ No. 441.

⁶ See *ibid.*, note 1.

⁷ No. 393.

somewhat futile. There would be widespread interest in the Conference, and the result might be considered inadequate.

The answer given to this was that it would not in fact be futile because France would be agreeing (if she did agree) for the first time to invite Germany to a Conference, and would be abandoning all the conditions and safeguards she had always insisted on. Moreover, public opinion would be pleased at the invitation sent to Germany, and would not be inclined to criticise the result—more particularly if the object of the Conference had been announced beforehand.

LORD HALIFAX, who had spoken to Sir Robert Vansittart on the subject, thought that the French were so anxious for a Meeting that they would agree to its limited character.

In the discussion a long Meeting was deprecated, owing to the suspicions that it would arouse in Germany that discussions were ranging over a wide field, and there was general agreement that it should be a very short Meeting, preferably of one day only.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN read the draft of a *communiqué* to be issued before the Conference.⁴

The terms of Mr. Chamberlain's *communiqué*, to be issued before the Conference, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs' *communiqué*, to be agreed to beforehand by the three Powers, were discussed in detail and a number of corrections were made.

Some discussion then took place as to whether action should not be taken with the German Government to let them know definitely that the sole object of the Conference was to invite them to a further Conference and not to discuss details of what was to happen at that Conference.

MR. EDEN agreed that this should be done, but thought it was unnecessary to say anything to Italy.

There was general agreement that before an approach was made to Germany, agreement would have to be reached with France and Belgium on the conditions of the Conference.

Generally it was felt that the proposed Conference, especially if held in London, would give us the initiative once more.

The Committee agreed to the following procedure:

- (a) That it was desirable that the Conference should be held in London, instead of in Brussels, on July 22nd; that it should be a short one; and that the subject for discussion should be closely defined beforehand;
- (b) That the French and Belgian Governments should be asked to agree beforehand to two *communiqués*:
 - (i) A *communiqué* to be issued *before* the Conference on the following lines:
'The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Belgium have decided to meet at London on July 22nd in order to consider how best to further their purpose of promoting a general European settlement';

- (ii) A *communiqué* to be issued *after* the Conference on the following lines:
- (1) That the main purpose to which the efforts of all nations must be directed was that of a general European settlement;
 - (2) That it was quite evident that such a settlement could only be achieved by the free co-operation of all the Powers concerned, and that nothing would be more fatal to the hopes of such a settlement than the division, apparent or real, of Europe into opposing *blocs*;
 - (3) That the three Powers, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom accordingly considered that steps should be taken as early as convenient to arrange a meeting of the five Locarno Powers on a footing of complete equality, and they are addressing an invitation to Germany and Italy for this purpose. At this meeting the first business to be undertaken should be the construction of a new agreement to take the place of the Locarno treaties which Germany has denounced;
 - (4) If progress could be made under this head other matters affecting European peace would no doubt come under discussion, and the representatives of the three Powers issuing the *communiqué* would therefore look forward, having in mind the proposals of the German Chancellor of the 31st March, to the widening of the area of the discussion in order to make it possible to reach the wider settlement of European problems which they conceive to be essential to a more peaceful state in Europe.
- (c) That if the Cabinet approved this procedure the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should see the French and Belgian Ambassadors on the following afternoon and tell them that His Majesty's Government had felt doubtful if in present circumstances it was advisable to hold a Conference, but they realised that the Geneva *communiqué* had been issued and that the position of the French Government was a difficult one. Consequently they were willing to hold a very short meeting in order to send an invitation to Germany and Italy to attend a meeting of the Locarno Powers. That was the sole object of this short meeting and it must be understood that the object was *not* the formulation between the three Powers of what was to be put to Germany. He should hand them the draft *communiqués* referred to in (b) (i) and (ii) above. He should add that if the French and Belgian Governments agreed to these proposals he intended to see the German Chargé d'Affaires and give him assurances as to the exact purpose and scope of the Meeting:
- (d) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should examine the draft *communiqués* referred to above and formulate a proposition to be considered by the Cabinet at their Meeting on the following morning.⁸

⁸ The Cabinet at its meeting on July 16 agreed after some discussion to the general lines of

procedure set out in paragraph (c) above. It added the comment that a meeting of the five Locarno powers before the next meeting of the League Assembly was preferable to one after it. 'Postponement to the later date was liable to increase the area of discussion, whereas if held before the Assembly it would be easier to confine the Conference to a new Locarno Treaty. One result might even be that Germany would return to the League of Nations and become associated with the proposed amendments to the Covenant.' See No. 464 below.

No. 455

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 1245 [C 5188/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 15, 1936*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked Sir Robert Vansittart this morning what the position now was as regards the projected meeting of Locarno Powers at Brussels.

2. Sir Robert Vansittart replied that he was not in a position to state the views of His Majesty's Government, but that, speaking personally, he saw considerable drawbacks in holding such a meeting without Italian representation. To do so would surely be to accentuate the apparent rift between Germany and Italy on the one hand and France, Belgium and ourselves on the other. The Austro-German agreement,¹ whatever its actual merits, had been warmly blessed by Signor Mussolini and had of course received his prior assent. It would be an exaggeration to say that the removal of the Austrian bone of contention meant that Italy would henceforth throw in her lot with Germany, but it would in his view be bad policy to drive her in that direction or to do anything which tended to re-create the pre-war grouping of Powers.

3. M. Corbin saw the force of this argument but said that he felt it would be difficult for the French Government to accept its complete validity. It would be a profound disappointment to them if no meeting were held. This would be interpreted as a sign of impotence in the face of events and would tend to weaken the position of the French Government at home.

I am, etc.,

(For the Secretary of State)

R. F. WIGRAM

¹ See No. 436, note 4.

No. 456

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received July 16, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 464 Telegraphic [J 6348/3957/1]

ROME, July 16, 1936, 12.25 a.m.

My telegram 460.¹

I received today reply to aide-mémoire which I left with Count Ciano on July 11th dealing with the subject of wireless transmission from Addis Ababa.² Ministry state that they are in touch with competent authorities on this subject, but doubt very much whether it will be possible in the case of an order of this kind to intervene with Marshal Graziani who is responsible for local Government. As the latter had stated when decree came into force, Mr. Roberts could avail himself of facilities afforded by Government station. Communication adds that Governor-General is being informed of the fact that telegrams received through Italian channels are not only delayed but are also subject to mutilation, in order that all possible measures shall be taken to avoid such inconveniences. Text by post.

¹ This telegram, despatched at midnight on July 13, said that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had asked the Colonial Ministry to enquire into Marshal Graziani's methods in notifying the 'ex British Legation' about restriction on the use of wireless.

² Cf. Nos. 416, 423, and 424.

No. 457

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Phipps (Berlin)
No. 145 Telegraphic [C 5229/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 16, 1936, 5 p.m.

German Chargé d'Affaires enquired yesterday of Sir R. Vansittart as to the prospects of a meeting of the Locarno Powers. He stated that his Government wished to participate. Personally, he would prefer it to take place in the first fortnight of September, that is before the meeting of the League. In any case the latest date should be very early in October.

He asked whether there would be a preliminary meeting between the three Powers. This would gravely prejudice the prospect of German participation, even if it did not entirely destroy it. Sir R. Vansittart replied that a new situation had arisen since the Austro-German agreement and the negative reply received from Italy. The whole matter was now under consider [*sic*] by His Majesty's Government. He must remember that the French and Belgian Governments desired a preliminary meeting. All parties however agreed that any concrete work must necessarily await a meeting of the five Powers, and if there was a preliminary meeting of the three Powers, it would evidently be purely formal, and only a prelude to the real one.¹

Repeated to Brussels No. 70 and Paris No. 27 Saving.

¹ In an account of this interview given to the Cabinet on July 16, Mr. Eden said that

Sir R. Vansittart had remarked that the susceptibilities of the French and Belgian Governments, who both desired a preliminary meeting, had to be taken into account; it was not a moment to boggle over formalities of procedure. 'At this Prince Bismarck had brightened considerably and had volunteered the observation that perhaps any preliminary conference would really be held to soothe the susceptibilities of the French. He had left in an optimistic spirit.' Cf. Prince Bismarck's account of this interview in *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 451.

No. 458

Mr. Eden to Mr. Walker (Athens)

No. 101 Telegraphic [R 4243/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 16, 1936, 7.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 144.¹

My telegram[s] to Sir P. Loraine Nos. 139² and 140³ will now have made it clear to you that His Majesty's Government never claimed nor desired any title to be consulted by three Mediterranean Governments on the question whether they considered December assurances to have lapsed or not to have lapsed on termination of sanctions.

You should take an early opportunity to make it clear to Greek Government that we have no complaint at 'having been faced with a *fait accompli*' and that surprise which you expressed arose out of a misunderstanding of our attitude.

¹ No. 450.

² No. 451.

³ No. 452.

No. 459

Mr. Walker (Athens) to Mr. Eden (Received July 16, 8.10 p.m.)

No. 146 Telegraphic [R 4280/294/67]

ATHENS, July 16, 1936, 7.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 144.¹

The President of the Council confirmed to me this morning that the Greek Government had informed the Italian Government on June [sic] 11th that they regarded *mutual* assurances as terminated. Unlike my previous informant, he appreciated the distinction between these and the unilateral assurances covered by your declaration of June 18th.² He added in confidence that recent events did not in any way indicate any change in Greece's determination to follow our lead in Mediterranean affairs.³

Repeated to Rome, Belgrade, Istanbul figures to Bucharest.

¹ No. 450.

² Cf. No. 373, note 2.

³ A minute by Mr. W. R. C. Green of July 17 said: 'This crossed our reply [No. 458] to 144.'

*Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)**No. 1242 [C 5141/4/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 16, 1936*

Sir,

M. Cambon called on Mr. Sargent on July 14th to make the following communication from his Government regarding the proposed meeting at Brussels of the Locarno Powers.

2. M. Cambon stated that notwithstanding the refusal of the Italian Government to attend this meeting in the absence of Germany,¹ the French Government considered that the meeting should take place were it only confined to Great Britain, France and Belgium. They considered the very refusal of Italy to co-operate made it all the more necessary to hold the meeting so as to demonstrate the fact that the three Powers were not dependent upon Italy in this matter. In answer to an enquiry on Mr. Sargent's part, M. Cambon was unable to give any clear view of what the French Government intended the agenda of the Conference to be in the circumstances, but he made it fairly clear that his Government did not intend that the Conference should meet merely in order to draw up an invitation to the German Government. The Conference was necessary in order to reaffirm the continuance of the co-operation initiated between the Locarno Powers last March, and would devote itself to reviewing the general situation which had now developed. Mr. Sargent reminded M. Cambon that from the very outset His Majesty's Government had stipulated that the Conference must have a constructive object and must not merely deal with the past, and that His Majesty's Government were not prepared merely to record the breakdown of the effort of conciliation. M. Cambon retorted that however this might be, the moment had clearly arisen for a frank exchange of views direct between the French and British Governments on the whole of this subject. The present arrangement whereby all matters were discussed through the intermediary of the Belgian Prime Minister could not possibly produce satisfactory results and was merely wasting time.

Meanwhile the French Government intended to address themselves direct to the Italian Government and to point out to them that they could not accept the arguments which had been put forward by the Italian Government for not attending the Brussels Conference. The argument about the Mediterranean assurances did not affect the French Government, and now that the French Government had stated that as far as they were concerned the assurances given last December to His Majesty's Government no longer held good, Italian co-operation at Brussels ought no longer to be withheld on this ground. As for the argument that Germany must be invited from the outset, the French Government were going to point out in Rome that they had a claim to be informed by, and discuss with, the Italian

¹ Cf. No. 436.

Government the position which the latter were now prepared to take up with regard to the decisions reached by the Locarno Powers last March, and more particularly with regard to the draft Letter attached to the Proposals of March 19th.² The most suitable place for such explanations and discussions would be the proposed meeting of the Locarno Powers at Brussels.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

² See No. 144.

No. 461

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 1247 [C 5221/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 16, 1936

Sir,

I asked the French Ambassador to come and see me to-day, when I stated that I wished to speak to him about the possibility of a three-Power meeting in Brussels.

2. The Ambassador at once replied that he, too, had been anxious to see me on this subject, since the French Government were considerably pre-occupied as to the fate of this meeting. I would be aware that a meeting between the Locarno Powers had been several times arranged and several times postponed. Finally, on the [3rd] July a *communiqué* had been issued at Geneva which definitely foreshadowed such a meeting¹ and the French Government attached the greatest importance to this being held.

3. In reply, I said that it must be evident to all that events in Europe since the Geneva Assembly had increased the difficulties in the way of a meeting between the representatives of Belgium, France and ourselves. It was useless to ignore this fact. At the same time, His Majesty's Government were conscious of the Geneva *communiqué* and appreciated the keen desire of the French Government that a meeting should take place. In our view all now depended upon what the meeting was to do. Indeed, our attitude to having a meeting at all was dependent on the meeting's programme. In the view of His Majesty's Government, if the meeting were to take place, it must be short and constructive, and the subjects for discussion must be closely defined beforehand. It should be made clear that it would be serving as a prelude to a five-Power meeting. Any other outcome of the three-Power meeting would only result in emphasising the divisions in Europe and assist to create blocs of Powers which it must be the desire of the French Government, as it was ours to avoid—our whole object being a European settlement.

4. The object of the meeting of the three Powers must not, therefore, be to formulate proposals or policies that should be put to Germany, but to agree on the preliminaries necessary to make possible a five-Power meeting. If we

¹ Cf. No. 407.

were to have such a meeting, His Majesty's Government would suggest it should be in London, and I understood the Belgian Government had no objection to a change of venue. In order to make the position absolutely clear, we had prepared two *communiqués* (copies enclosed herein),² which I handed to the Ambassador, explaining to him that only if it were understood that the purpose of the meeting was to agree to some such *communiqué* as the second could we consent to attend the meeting. We took up this attitude because of our keen anxiety to avoid creating blocs in Europe.

5. After some discussion, the Ambassador, while he would not commit his Government, said that he thought the first *communiqué* might prove acceptable, but he took some exception to the second. He pointed out that, if his Government were to agree to this, they would then be yielding up all that they were justly entitled to as a result of the German action of the 7th March, and this was really a very great demand to make.

6. I replied that, while this might be so, what benefit could the French Government derive from now insisting upon those rights? It did not seem to me that they would gain anything by so doing. The Ambassador replied that he was confident that his Government would not like the *communiqué*, that they would at least wish to have some reference to the 7th March, and to the fact that there had been no reply to our questions to the German Government. The Ambassador also indicated some doubt as to whether his Government would be willing to arrange for a meeting in London. He remarked that the French Government had already been to London once recently, and since he understood that we did not wish to go to Paris, Brussels might seem to have been preferable. I replied that London had been suggested largely because I thought the French Government would welcome it. It would give M. Blum an opportunity of meeting Mr. Baldwin and to make contacts with other British Ministers which would not be possible in any other capital. If, however, there was no other obstacle than the place of meeting, I should not make any difficulties about that if the *communiqué* could be agreed. The Ambassador admitted the value that should be attached to M. Blum and M. Delbos making personal contacts in London, and added that on this matter he was only giving a personal impression.

7. On leaving, his Excellency promised to communicate with me as soon as possible the views of his Government, though he was clearly not optimistic as to their reaction.³

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

² Not printed; cf. No. 464 below.

³ Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 464. Mr. Eden also asked the Belgian Ambassador to come to see him on July 16, and spoke to him in the same terms as those of paragraphs 3 and 4 of this despatch. The Ambassador 'clearly approved of the *communiqués* and of the reasons which I had given him for the procedure proposed', and undertook to communicate with his government. Mr. Eden suggested that if the Belgian Government agreed with what he had proposed 'it would be a considerable help to us if they could say so in Paris'. Cf. *D.D.B.*, *op. cit.*, No. 96, and some general observations by Baron P. van Zuylen, *Les Mains Libres*, pp. 356-63.

Letter from Mr. O'Malley to M. Örs
[R 4309/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 17, 1936

Sir,

With reference to the Memorandum which you were good enough to communicate to the Foreign Office to-day,¹ I have the honour to state that in the view of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom the obligations which they undertook by the assurance given to the Turkish Government in December last² still hold good only in so far as they were continued by the declarations made by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons on June 18th and at Geneva on July 1st. They do not wish to express any opinion on the continuance or discontinuance of the assurances given to them in December by France, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece.

The French Government and the Greek Government have declared that so far as they are concerned they regard the mutual assurances of December to have come to an end with the termination of sanctions, and His Majesty's Government have no desire to contest this statement or the right of the French Government and the Greek Government to have made it. It follows that, in the view of the British Government it is for the Turkish Government to decide for themselves whether, in their view, the assurances which they gave in December to His Majesty's Government still continue to be or have ceased to be in force.³

I have, &c.,

(for the Secretary of State)

O. O'MALLEY

¹ A minute of July 17 by Mr. O'Malley said that M. Örs had given him that afternoon an Aide-Mémoire and 'begged *very urgently* that he might receive today an answer to the question which it contains'. The British Government was asked 'de bien vouloir l'éclairer précisément sur le point de savoir si les engagements mutuels d'assistance de décembre 1935 entre le Gouvernement de la République et le Gouvernement Britannique sont actuellement en vigueur, aux yeux du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté'. Mr. O'Malley minuted: 'This question merely repeats what he asked before [cf. No. 452] . . . I submit a draft reply which is a little more explicit, and, I hope, correct.'

² Cf. Volume XV, Nos. 339, 340, and 409.

³ A note on the filed copy of this letter says that it was sent to the Turkish Embassy by special messenger at 5.30 p.m. on that day, July 17.

Letter from Mr. Eden to Mr. Runciman¹ (Board of Trade)
 [C 5197/99/18]²

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 17, 1936

My dear Walter,

You know only too well the grave international situation with which we are faced at the moment. We discussed it at length at last Tuesday week's Cabinet.³

2. The vigorous and protracted efforts we have made to organise peace on the basis of the Covenant of the League of Nations have suffered a very serious setback; and our attempt, which dates from the years immediately following the War, to promote some general settlement in Europe by means, in particular, of the establishment of a political arrangement between Germany on the one hand and the Powers victorious in the late war on the other, makes distressingly little progress in the face of a situation which continues to deteriorate and of strains which continue to increase. Disarmament and the attempt to limit armaments have at least temporarily failed. In the economic field the international financial system has collapsed and, partly

¹ Mr. W. Runciman was President of the Board of Trade.

² This letter was the culmination of discussions which had gone on since the beginning of 1936 as to the possibility of an economic solution of the German problem: cf. Volume XV, Nos. 490, 493, 509, 522, 524, 530, and Appendices I and IV.

In a note of June 25 (C 4757/99/18) Mr. Jebb gave some account of the meetings of a group which since January had been discussing over a series of dinners the practicability of reaching some economic understanding with Germany. Mr. Jebb, and subsequently Mr. R. A. Leeper, had joined the group as observers; other members included Mr. Barrington-Ward of *The Times*, Professor N. F. (now Sir Noel) Hall of London University, Sir George Schuster (finance and trade expert), Mr. Enfield (Ministry of Agriculture), and Mr. L. Pearson, Secretary to the Canadian High Commissioner. Much of the discussion centred on a paper by Mr. Hall, who stressed the importance of restoring some part of the multi-lateral system of international trade (C 4759/99/18). The paper had been shown to Mr. Brown (Board of Trade) and Mr. Waley (Treasury) (neither of whom was very encouraging, though Mr. Waley at first admitted that Professor Hall's views on the desirability of the United Kingdom admitting more German goods were decidedly interesting). It was known that Mr. S. M. Bruce stoutly maintained that in the economic field some move on Britain's part was essential if general progress was to be made, and favoured a unilateral declaration by the British Government abolishing imperial preference in the non-self-governing Empire.

These points were discussed by Mr. Jebb with Mr. Bruce, on Lord Stanhope's instructions, on June 9. Mr. Bruce believed that the modification of His Majesty's Government's tariff policy would assist towards a recovery both of Germany's foreign trade and, consequently of the Dominions' export trade in raw materials. Subsequently Mr. Eden expressed himself as in 'almost complete agreement' with these views (C 5197/99/18) and desired that they should be considered as soon as possible by the departments concerned. Sir R. Vansittart and Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin then agreed that the best course would be to send the proposals to the President of the Board of Trade in a letter signed by Mr. Eden. Sir R. Vansittart wrote on July 14: 'The letter is a good one, and sets out the case fairly and without undue bias. (There are still those who are chary of assisting dictators without solid evidence of a change of spirit.)' Mr. Eden approved the draft (July 15).

³ Cf. Appendix II to this Volume.

for this reason and partly perhaps for political reasons, there is a strong tendency in many countries towards economic autarky with all its economic and political consequences.

3. The following extract from the recent report of the Director of the International Labour Office, whatever opinions may be held regarding Mr. Butler's conclusions,⁴ is typical of a considerable body of thought not only in this country but also on the Continent:

'In 1936 the perception that the failure to ensure economic and social equilibrium was the most radical flaw in the peace settlement is dimly beginning to dawn. The fact that the political crisis provoked by the re-entry of German troops into the Rhineland at once called forth suggestions for a world economic conference is an indication of the distance which comprehension has travelled since the Armistice. There is now a vague awareness that territorial claims and armament programmes are not the fundamental issues and that it is impossible to allay the international tension which they have created without striking deeper. They are not the causes of our present discontents, but the symptoms. The roots are to be found in actual or threatened impoverishment, declining standards of life, insecurity for the future of themselves and their children which darkens the outlook of the present generation in so many countries. The remedy is not to be found, then, in political pacts or frontier rectifications or disarmament conferences alone. These methods have been tried and have failed because they did not touch the real source of the trouble. So nowadays we are beginning to talk of the abolition of trade restrictions, the distribution of raw materials, the stabilisation of currencies, an international monetary agreement, the resumption of international lending, as things which are not merely required to promote economic recovery but which are indispensable to the future stability of the whole political structure.'

4. We keep asking ourselves in the Foreign Office whether there is not some new initiative which may at once, despite the difficulties I have enumerated, calm opinion and provide a new opening for cooperation in Europe. Could such an initiative lie in the economic field? The Belgian Prime Minister, in particular, seems to think that it could; and the French Government in their suggestion that the Briand proposal for European union⁵ should be revived, appear to be thinking in the same direction. The Germans have referred to the importance of the economic question in their memorandum of March 31st.⁶ But what, in practice, you will ask, do I mean by this economic initiative?

5. I wonder whether it could conceivably be on the following broad lines:

(a) A statement of our willingness to agree to the Colonial Raw Materials

⁴ Cf. No. 122, note 3.

⁵ The reference is to M. Briand's memorandum of May 1, 1930, on the organization of a system of European federal union: see Volume I, No. 186, and subsequent F.O. views thereon in Nos. 189, 193, 194, and 196.

⁶ See No. 193, note 2.

question being investigated at Geneva, and further of our willingness, so far as we are concerned, to subscribe to any international convention guaranteeing free access on the lines of paragraph 40(e) of the recent report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Freedom of Access to Colonial Raw Materials.⁷ I recognise that such a statement on our part would do little, if anything, to alleviate the difficulties now felt by the so-called 'starved' Powers in paying for their raw materials imports, which are discussed in paragraphs 26 to 28 of the above-mentioned report. Nevertheless, there might be considerable advantage from the point of view of 'neutral' opinion in a declaration of good intentions on our part, and, in any case, we are committed to the principle of an enquiry by the League.

- (b) A declaration of our willingness to abolish Imperial Preference in the non-self-governing Empire, and even to approximate such territories to League Mandates, so far as this is possible; the Plymouth Committee on Mandated Territories mentioned these possibilities, though pointing to the objections to them.⁸
- (c) Some declaration on monetary policy, if the Treasury can before September devise anything useful in agreement with the Americans and the French; M. Frederic Jenny in the July number of *Lloyds' Bank Review* makes a powerful appeal for currency stabilisation.
- (d) Tariff adjustments by ourselves designed to admit more semi-finished goods from industrial Europe into this country in exchange for the admission of increased quantities of Dominion primary products into European industrial countries and increased purchases of finished goods by the Dominions from us.

6. It is on this last point that I particularly wish to consult you, since it is urged as a point well worthy of study by Mr. Stanley Bruce. The attached record of a conversation with him will give some indication of his views,⁹ and you will see that reference is made to a memorandum by Professor Noel Hall of the University of London. A copy of this memorandum is also attached.⁹ In any case it seems to me that a number of apparently quite intelligent minds are thinking in terms of some modification of our present policy to meet a set of circumstances, which they hold to differ from those of 1932.

7. Now I cannot assert, and it is not for me even to suggest with any confidence, that any 'initiative' such as I have outlined is either practicable or really calculated to provide a way out of all our troubles. But what I am convinced of is the fact that, if we can take no 'initiative', the situation in Europe is only too likely to go from bad to worse. I think we may have to take certain risks, and even to contemplate 'sacrifices', provided always that there is a reasonable prospect of such 'sacrifices' ultimately redounding to the general good—including our own. It is, therefore, in no sense whatever a policy of 'Danegeld' which I should advocate, i.e. of giving sops to Germany.

⁷ Not printed (W 195/195/98).

⁸ See Appendix III to this Volume.

⁹ Not printed: see note 1.

The only economic 'sacrifices', indeed, that I should recommend would be sacrifices of sectional and immediate interests from which ultimate advantage might reasonably be expected to accrue, and even this not as 'concessions to Germany' but as part of a general programme for the economic recovery of Europe as a whole.

8. Some may hold that any policy which at the moment may strengthen Germany economically or financially would be unwise. Such persons would say that the present German Government, for political reasons and as part of the essential organisation of Germany for war, are embarked on a policy of economic autarky. From this policy, it may be argued, they will not depart, and any fresh advantages which may result for Germany from a better organisation of the economic system of Europe will only be used for an acceleration of her re-armament programme. Others may contend that the apparently increasingly dangerous financial and economic situation in Germany is itself the danger—on the theory that it is leading inexorably to a critical moment when war will become the only alternative to collapse. In support of this theory it is pointed out that Germany's exports have fallen from 13,000 million R.M. in 1929 to little over 4,000 millions in 1935 and her imports in the same proportion and that, though her unemployment, which when Hitler came to power three years ago stood at over 6 millions, has now been reduced to 2½ millions, that has been achieved only at the cost of piling up debt at the rate of some 6,000 million R.M. a year. A considerable part of these vast sums has been spent on the extension of the armed forces, i.e. on unproductive expenditure. 'If the German Government', points out a recent report¹⁰ from the Financial Adviser to our Embassy in Berlin, 'continues to place orders for objects not having economic value, Germany must continue to live on her reserves and face a falling standard of living. If, on the other hand, her savings are to be invested once more in productive assets—it matters little whether the orders are placed by the Government or by private interests—in either case markets must be found for the goods produced. Those markets cannot be found in Germany—unless again she is to become a more and more closed and impoverished system. No solution can be propounded except the one solution of reviving Germany's foreign trade, and that with a productive equipment which for seven years has not been kept up to date. It seems that a "boom" of the present kind may be kept up for a certain time, but only at the expense of a steady accumulation of difficulties—both on the exchange side and on the side of internal production—which make the readjustment at the end of the government boom a matter of growing difficulty'. The conclusion drawn is that if there is to be any hope at all of making Germany a 'good European' she must be helped to escape from crisis through a recovery of her foreign trade brought about by re-adjustments both on her part and on the part of other countries. 'Undoubtedly', Mr. Pinsent points out, 'the principal element in any such readjustment will have to be a change in Germany's currency policy, and probably a fresh settlement regarding her external debt'. Clearly, however,

¹⁰ Not printed.

these measures cannot of themselves suffice unless markets can also be opened; and this in turn raises the question of our own tariff policy, seeing that the market in which Germany can most readily earn the sterling she needs for the purchase of raw materials is precisely our own. The advocates of the theory here outlined contend that this issue must be faced.

9. Confronted as we thus are by a division of opinion between those who think that economic rehabilitation of Germany is essential for European peace, and those who think that any policy likely to strengthen Germany economically is thereby increasing the risk of war, it is perhaps not necessary for the moment to decide between these two points of view. Events most probably will decide for us. What I want to know is whether such an approach as I have outlined in paragraph 5 above is practicable and whether in your opinion the country would approve it.

10. I come then to the only definite proposal which I wish to put forward at this stage. Could we not immediately set up a committee of officials from the departments concerned who should be instructed to consider, in the light of the present political situation, Professor Hall's scheme and any others of a similar nature which may have been put forward by other authorities? The terms of reference of such a Committee might, I suggest, be 'to consider in general the commercial relations between the British Empire and industrial Europe, with special reference to the memorandum by Professor Hall, and in particular the commercial relations between the United Kingdom and Germany. Their enquiry should be directed towards ascertaining whether any economic initiative, and notably any proposal for tariff readjustments, either by the United Kingdom or by any members of the British Empire, could usefully be made or suggested as a basis for discussions with the German Government; and the Committee should conduct its investigation in the light of the latest European political developments and of the terms of the recent reports (a) on freedom of access to colonial raw materials and (b) on the transfer of a colonial mandate or mandates to Germany.'

11. The name of Sir Horace Wilson suggests itself as an excellent Chairman for such a Committee, which might perhaps be also authorised to cross-examine 'outside' experts, such as Professor Hall himself. It might in any case be desirable in some way to obtain the views of Mr. Montagu Norman.¹¹

12. If you should agree to the formation of such a Committee, it would clearly be desirable for it to report early so that Ministers may have an opportunity of considering its recommendations during the Recess, and thus be in a position to decide our policy at Geneva and towards Germany in full knowledge of the report.

13. I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosures to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Secretaries of State for the Dominions, India and the Colonies.

Yours ever,
ANTHONY EDEN

¹¹ Governor of the Bank of England.

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 1255 [C 5308/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 18, 1936

Sir,

The French Ambassador brought me to-day the answer of his Government to our proposal for a preliminary conference in London (see my despatch No. 1247 of the 16th July),¹ on condition that there was previous agreement on the two draft *communiqués* which I had given him.

2. M. Corbin said that the French Government agreed to the meeting taking place in London; that they agreed in considering that an effort should be made to reach a general settlement; and that they concurred in the general lines of the procedure which we had proposed. On the other hand, they foresaw a danger that the Five-Power Conference might be convened without the necessary preparation, and they wished therefore that, before the Five-Power Conference, there should be a preliminary exchange of views through the diplomatic channel. M. Corbin also warned me that at the forthcoming conference in London M. Blum would ask us what our attitude would be in the event of the failure of the proposed Five-Power Conference.

3. As regards the *communiqués*, M. Corbin brought with him redrafts² which contained certain definite variations, or rather additions. For convenience of reference, our original drafts and a translation of the French redrafts in parallel columns are also attached.³

4. M. Corbin made it clear that the French Government attached considerable importance to the preliminary *communiqué*. He argued that, whereas the *communiqué* of the 3rd July⁴ merely talked about discussing the present situation, our present draft introduced a new element, namely, the promotion of a general European settlement. The French Government did not object to this new objective, but they felt strongly that it would come somewhat as a shock to French public opinion, and in order to mitigate this shock they wished to indicate the continuity of Anglo-French policy by referring back to the arrangements of the 19th March.⁵

5. I told M. Corbin that, notwithstanding these considerations, I really could not agree that the *communiqué* should refer either to undertakings existing between us or to the development of the situation since the 19th March. In order, however, to get over the difficulty felt by the French, I suggested that the preliminary *communiqué* might be redrafted somewhat on the following lines:

'As a result of the exchange of views foreshadowed in the *communiqué* issued in Geneva on the 4th July, the Governments of France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom have now decided that there shall be a meeting

¹ No. 461.² See *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, Nos. 470, 471, and 472.³ See Annex to this document.⁴ See No. 407.⁵ See No. 144.

communiqué, and that outstanding points can be discussed at the conference itself.

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

ANNEX TO No. 464

Proposed Meeting of Locarno Powers

Draft Preliminary Communiqué

British Proposal

As a result of the exchange of views foreshadowed in the *communiqué* issued in Geneva on the 4th July, the Governments of France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom have now decided that there shall be a meeting in London on _____ of representatives of these three Powers, in order to consider how best to further their purpose of promoting a general European settlement.

French Proposal

As a result of the exchange of views foreshadowed in the *communiqué* issued in Geneva on the 4th July, the Governments of France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, *taking into account the obligations existing between them*, have now decided that there shall be a meeting in London on _____ of representatives of these three Powers *with a view to examining the developments of the situation since the 19th March*, and to discovering the best means of ensuring the peace of Europe by a general settlement.

[Draft] *Final Communiqué*

British Proposal

The Representatives of France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, having met in _____ on _____, have arrived at the following conclusions:

(1) The main purpose to which the efforts of all European nations must be directed is to secure a general settlement.

(2) It is evident that such a settlement can only be achieved by the free co-operation of all the Powers concerned, and that nothing would be more fatal to the hopes of such a settlement than the division, apparent or real, of Europe into opposing blocs.

French Proposal

The Representatives of France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, having met in _____ on _____, have arrived at the following conclusions:

(1) The main purpose to which the efforts of all European nations must be directed is to *consolidate peace* by means of a general settlement.

(2) Such a settlement can only be achieved by the free co-operation of all the Powers concerned, and nothing would be more fatal to the hopes of such a settlement than the division, apparent or real, of Europe into opposing blocs.

British Proposal

(3) The three Powers, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom, accordingly consider that steps should be taken to arrange a meeting of the five Locarno Powers as soon as such a meeting can conveniently be held. At this meeting the first business to be undertaken should, in their opinion, be the negotiation on the footing of complete equality of new agreements to take the place of the Locarno Treaties.

(4) If progress could be made under this head, other matters affecting European peace would, in their opinion, naturally come under discussion, and the representatives of the three Powers, having in mind the proposals of the German Chancellor of the 31st March, would accordingly look forward to the widening of the area of the discussion in such manner as to facilitate that general settlement of those problems which they conceive to be essential to the tranquillity of Europe.

The three Governments intend accordingly to enter into communication with the German and Italian Governments with a view to their participation in the meeting thus proposed.

French Proposal

(3) The three Powers, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom, accordingly consider that steps should be taken to arrange a meeting of the five Locarno Powers as soon as such a meeting can conveniently be held. The first business to be undertaken should be to *settle the situation created by the German initiative of the 7th March*, and then to negotiate *respecting* a new agreement to take the place of the Rhine Pact of Locarno.

If progress could be made under this head, other matters affecting European peace will, in their opinion, arise, *for the discussion of which the collaboration of all the interested Powers would be indispensable.*

The representatives of the three Powers, *abiding by the fundamental principles of the arrangement of the 19th March*, and having also in mind the proposals of the German Chancellor of the 31st March, *and of the French Government of the 8th April*, have accordingly examined the question of the eventual widening of the area of the discussion in such a manner as to facilitate the general settlement of those problems the solution of which they conceive to be essential to the peace of Europe.

The three Governments accordingly propose to enter into communication with the German and Italian Governments with a view to obtaining their participation in the meeting thus proposed.

Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople) to Mr. Eden (Received July 19, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 71 Telegraphic [R 4332/294/67]

Immediate

CONSTANTINOPLE, July 19, 1936, 12.55 a.m.

Your telegram No. 36.¹

The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs arrived here this morning from Angora (as did also the Prime Minister).² I saw him without delay and am particularly to tell you that as a result of our conversation the whole situation between the Turks and ourselves both as regards Mediterranean assurances and as regards Montreux Conference³ (concerning which I am telegraphing separately) has been entirely cleared up. Complete understanding and confidence has been restored.

2. Italian Ambassador had again been pressing in Angora last week for a reply to his enquiry about the termination of December assurances. There were still obscurities in reports from Turkish Embassy in London and it was not until I had telephoned to Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs as reported in my telegram No. 65² that latter really began to understand where His Majesty's Government stood in the matter though still puzzled by the reason. Thereupon Italian Ambassador was informed that the desirability of declaring lapse of December assurances would be recommended to Turkish Cabinet.

3. Turkish Government having now understood the position as regards ourselves now propose to reply to the Italian Government in exactly the same sense as you had done viz. that reciprocal assurances of December had lapsed since sanctions were raised but that they were giving His Majesty's Government a unilateral assurance to cover the period of uncertainty.

4. His Excellency sought my views in regard to this proposed reply. I expressed the opinion, pointing out in the circumstances it could only be

¹ This Foreign Office telegram of July 16 said that Foreign Office telegrams Nos. 139 and 140 (Nos. 451 and 452) would have enabled Sir P. Loraine 'finally to dissipate this protracted misunderstanding' about the Mediterranean assurances.

² In his telegram No. 65 of July 18 from Constantinople, Sir P. Loraine commented on the misunderstanding which had arisen with regard to the Mediterranean assurances. 'There is an ambiguity in declaration of June 18th. I certainly understood it to mean not that a fresh unilateral assurance was being given in replacement of previous reciprocal one but that earlier assurance so far as His Majesty's Government were concerned was being prolonged so as to cover a period of uncertainty which must follow the raising of sanctions.' He said he had telephoned the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and explained to him 'what I now understand to be broad position viz. that reciprocal notes exchanged last December are regarded as having lapsed . . . but that a separate, later and unilateral assurance to Powers with whom His Majesty's Government in United Kingdom had exchanged previous assurances last year has been given' by Mr. Eden's two declarations. He concluded: 'Without personal contact with Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs I cannot feel sure of being able to clear up all aspects of this misunderstanding. I am therefore making wearisome journey to Angora on Sunday night [July 19] and shall be back here Tuesday morning. But please do not send me any telegrams to Angora.'

³ See Chapter VI below.

a purely personal one, that it would be agreeable to you and that you would hardly wish to discourage an entirely spontaneous gesture of this friendly kind on the part of the Turkish Government provided that latter thought it would not react unfavourably in their own relations with Italy. I begged him however to be very careful, if Turkish Cabinet took the decision he had outlined, to make it perfectly plain to Italy and to the outside world that Turkish assurance to His Majesty's Government was being given absolutely spontaneously and *proprio motu*. He gave me a definite assurance in the desired sense.

5. I also explained to him in personal confidence how Italian assurances of friendship and pacific intentions, which he had once received from Italian Ambassador, had had their origin in personal initiative of the Italians which you had approved and that in giving them Italian Government were pertinently aware that their issue connoted no engagement at all by you to withdraw your declaration of June 18th.

6. I furthermore explained to him my own . . .⁴ conciliatory policy in Mediterranean viz:

(1) So long as they consider there remains any uncertainty His Majesty's Government will stand by the States who helped in applying the Covenant.

(2) For all purposes of peace and security His Majesty's Government will strengthen their own naval position in the Mediterranean.

(3) His Majesty's Government will encourage appeasement, avoid anything likely to prejudice the prospects of an eventual general Mediterranean settlement by general agreement; it being clearly preferable that Italy should if possible be brought back into the ranks of collaborating and pacific Powers.

7. Lastly His Excellency asked me whether I knew whether or how Yugoslav Government had replied to Italian enquiry about the lapse of December assurances. I was unable to enlighten him.

8. I hope to see Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs on Tuesday before he returns to Angora. It would be valuable to me if you felt able meanwhile to approve of my language.

Repeated to Rome, Athens, Belgrade, and Saving to Bucharest.

⁴ The text was here uncertain.

No. 466

Minute by Sir R. Vansittart for Mr. Eden

[C 5315/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 19, 1936*

I am perturbed by Cabinet conclusion (c) of July 16¹—see marked passage. I hope that this may be an error of recording. If so, it should be corrected. For what purpose would there be in failing to cover the ground that even

¹ No. 454, note 7.

Hitler has offered to cover? You will remember that he has offered bilateral pacts of non-aggression to his neighbours. Our object should be to *widen* the scope of his offers, not to '*confine*' them. In conjunction with your expert advisers I recently—during your absence—put up a paper, which Lord Halifax circulated to the Cabinet,² pointing out the great danger from our point of view of confining our aims and professions of faith to the narrow agenda of M. van Zeeland. It seems to have had very little effect, if your colleagues are really animated by the desire to work for even less than Hitler has already held out. We shall be branded, and rightly branded if we play with these *arrière-pensées*. If we wish to escape running, and uselessly running, the dangers which I have set forth fully in the above-mentioned paper, we must not only treat the new Locarno as a first step in a European settlement—of sorts—but at least *begin* talking of those other matters at the first conference with Germany. If we don't even begin, as suggested by the Cabinet conclusion, our previous professions will seem meaningless, and we shall get a bad name for a precious poor result.

For let us all now try to see things exactly as they are, and each try to give ourselves a precise conception of what we expect to get out of a new Locarno.

The West is not the danger-spot now or indeed for some while to come, except in connection with the colonies. It is probable that other items are higher on Germany's list for priorities. When Germany has fulfilled those priorities (i.e. when she is at full strength and already expanding) the value of the western treaty will depend not on her signature, but on her spirit. The real safeguard will be not another piece of paper but our own strength, i.e. if we are strong enough, the colonies may again go down to the bottom of the list of priorities, and we *may* be able to live safely if not very amicably. But the actual signature of a western treaty, that seemed to give Germany any warrant for a free hand in the centre or east of Europe (vide conclusions) will only *accelerate* a course of events that may bring on trouble with us, i.e. in the West, *before* we have reached that desirable situation of at least relative safety. It will in fact be playing the German game, which in view of the position of our own armaments—ever present to *my* mind at least—would seem disastrously shortsighted and incompatible with realism. For it is at least doubtful whether there will be any real and ultimate security in any Western treaty, unless the spirit of Germany is changed by it. And who would prophesy that?

In a word, I agree that we must pursue the policy of seeking a western treaty*, though only as a first instalment of something wider. But we must make no mean-looking manoeuvres in pursuit of it; and that, I feel sure, would be the effect of spending a fortnight in September 'confining' ourselves to the West only, without a word about anything else.

R. V. July 19

* The real argument is doubtless that 'the public' expect this course of

² No. 447.

H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment]. And up to a point this is certainly right. I only hope that H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment], if successful up to a point, won't allow the public to ask successfully for a cessation or slowing up of our rearmament, until we see how events develop in Europe, for these may be the prelude to demands in Africa.

In today's *Sunday Times* 'Scrutator' asserts—and this is also the upshot of a memorandum by Sir R. Craigie³ that I am also submitting to you—that it is 'sound policy' to take what you can get immediately and not to trouble unduly about the rest. I, on the contrary, maintain that it is 'sound policy' to look ahead and to weigh carefully the *eventual* worth of what one can get *now*; and I do not believe that a western treaty will bury the colonial issue, while Germany's return to the League, on Hitler's own showing, will actually raise it.

R. V.

³ Not printed.

No. 467

Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople)

No. 39 Telegraphic [R 4332/294/67]

Urgent

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 20, 1936, 11.55 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 65¹ and 71² show that some misapprehensions of facts and of our views still exist in mind of yourself and of Turkish Government.

Please take no action and do all you can to discourage Turkish Government from taking any action till you hear from me further. I will telegraph again tomorrow.³

¹ See No. 465, note 2.

² No. 465.

³ See No. 471 below.

No. 468

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 1270 [C 5336/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 20, 1936*

Sir,

I asked the French Ambassador to come and see me this morning when I stated that we had been giving careful consideration to the amendments which he had proposed to the two *communiqués* to be issued in connexion with the London meeting of the three Locarno Powers. On reflection I must confirm the view which I had previously expressed to him that the texts

which he had put forward would not fulfil our purpose.¹ We had, however, made every endeavour to meet the French point of view. I thereupon handed the Ambassador the text of the two *communiqués* attached.² The Ambassador replied that he would certainly forward these texts to his Government, at the same time he must point out that they were far from satisfying his government's apprehensions. In reply I made an urgent appeal to the Ambassador to press his Government to accept the *communiqués* in the form in which I was now putting them forward. I wished to speak quite frankly: the Ambassador knew there were many people in this country who would prefer not to have this interim meeting, but would have wished for a joint invitation to be sent through the Diplomatic channel to Germany and Italy for a meeting of the five Locarno Powers. His Majesty's Government, having carefully considered the position, appreciated the French point of view and were willing to agree to this preliminary meeting on the conditions which I had mentioned to him at our first interview on this subject. I, therefore, felt justified in asking the Ambassador, since we had gone so far to meet the French point of view, to accept the texts as they stood.

I am, etc.,

ANTHONY EDEN

¹ See No. 464.

² Not printed here; they are reproduced in French in *D.D.F.*, Series 2, vol. iii, No. 2.

No. 469

Mr. Eden to Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

No. 1271 [C 5337/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 20, 1936

Sir,

The French Ambassador came to see me to-night when he stated that his Government were in agreement with the first *communiqué* now proposed by us, subject to the suppression of the word 'present'.¹ They were also in agreement with the spirit and intention of the whole of the second *communiqué* and with the text, except in respect of paragraph 3. Even in respect of paragraph 3 they were in agreement with the spirit, but would ask for minor modifications of form. The Ambassador emphasised particularly that the French Government did not like the word 'liquidate'.²

2. His Excellency pressed very strongly that in view of the extent to which the French Government had met us, we should announce to-night that a meeting had been definitely arranged for Thursday. The delays were having

¹ Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 2. The British text stated that the object of the meeting was 'd'examiner la présente situation. . .'

² The British text at this point looked forward to a meeting of the five Locarno Powers which would negotiate a new agreement in place of the Rhine Pact 'and thus liquidate the situation created by the German initiative of the 7th March'.

a bad effect in Paris and there was really no precedent for asking the Governments to agree not only to the general tenor of the final *communiqué* but almost to every comma before they met. After all Governments must have a certain amount of good faith in each other and the French Government had gone a very long way indeed to meet our point of view.

3. After consultation with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer who were available in the House, I told the Ambassador that we could agree to the announcement being made to-night, but that if it were to be made I should prefer that it should be in the terms of our own *communiqué*. To this both the French and Belgian Ambassadors (the latter having joined us at this stage) agreed. When, however, M. Corbin read to me the French text of our first *communiqué* it seemed to me that the last sentence of the French translation did not clearly interpret our purpose and might even have led to misunderstanding elsewhere. After some discussion, during which we were unable to agree upon a new French text for this portion of the *communiqué*, it was decided to adjourn the matter until tomorrow morning, more particularly since the Belgian Ambassador explained that owing to the holiday in Belgium, he could not get into touch with his Ministers tonight.³

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

³ *D.D.F.*, *ibid.*, No. 3, shows that M. Delbos instructed M. Corbin on the evening of July 20 to accept the new British draft for the first *communiqué* subject to the deletion of the word 'present', and to leave further discussion of the text of the final *communiqué* to the meeting itself.

No. 470

Mr. Eden to Sir E. Ovey (Brussels)

No. 373 [C 5335/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 20, 1936*

Sir,

I asked the Belgian Ambassador to come and see me this morning when I handed to him the attached texts¹ and explained to him that they were an endeavour on our part to meet the French point of view. The Ambassador demurred a little at the reference in the first *communiqué* to a European settlement. He remarked that this was rather a tall order for a small country like Belgium to embark on so ambitious a programme. I replied that the Ambassador would be aware from the text of the final *communiqué* that we were to begin with the negotiation of a new Locarno settlement and if this were explained in Brussels I could not believe there would be any great difficulty.

2. The Ambassador then said that he had delivered my message in Brussels at the week-end, asking the Belgian Government if they felt able

¹ See No. 468, note 2.

to do so to support our point of view in Paris.² In strictest confidence the Ambassador wished to let me know that the Belgian Government had done this.

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

² See No. 461, note 3.

No. 471

Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine (Constantinople)

No. 41 Telegraphic [R 4332/294/67]

Important

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 21, 1936, 6.30 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 65¹ and 71² and my telegram No. 39.³

It is not the case that we ever told Italian or any other Government that we regarded reciprocal undertakings of December as having lapsed. You will now have learnt from my telegram No. 253⁴ to Rome and my telegram to you No. 139⁵ that the point is one on which we declined to express an opinion. Turkish Chargé d'Affaires raised this point again on July 17th⁶ and was informed in reply as follows:

'In the view of His Majesty's Government obligations which they undertook in December still hold good only in so far as they were continued by my declarations of June 18th⁷ in the House of Commons and on July 1st in Geneva.⁸ They do not wish to express any opinion on continuance or discontinuance of assurances given to them by France, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece. French Government and Greek Government have declared that so far as they are concerned they regard mutual assurances of December to have ended with termination of sanctions and His Majesty's Government have no desire to contest this statement or the right of Greek and French Governments to have made it. It follows that in our view it is for Turkish Government to decide for themselves whether in their view assurances which they gave in December to His Majesty's Government still continue or have ceased to be in force.'

General situation in Mediterranean seems to us to have been radically altered by pacificatory assurances which have now spontaneously been given by Italian Government to Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey (see Rome telegram No. 458).⁹ I presume that these assurances have in effect been communicated to the Turkish Government as they have been to the Greek and Yugoslav Governments. For your own information and on that assumption I am now considering whether, in view of these assurances, the 'period of uncertainty following the termination of action under Article 16' has not

¹ See No. 465, note 2.

² No. 465.

³ No. 467.

⁴ No. 437.

⁵ No. 451.

⁶ Cf. No. 462.

⁷ See No. 373, note 2.

⁸ No. 395.

⁹ No. 445.

now come to an end; in which event the assurances I gave to the three Mediterranean countries would be no longer 'appropriate to the circumstances' and would therefore cease to operate. (Passages between inverted commas are, as you will appreciate, quotations from my declaration of June 18th). I will let you know further on this point in a day or two.

Meanwhile if the Italian assurances are of the satisfactory nature that I anticipate, you should have no difficulty in explaining to the Turkish Government, without hurting their feelings, that these assurances have now rendered unnecessary any assurances on *their* part, for it would seem clear that any period of danger in the Mediterranean is closed in circumstances thus altered. Moreover we apprehend a real risk that for Turkish Government now to reciprocate unilateral assurances which we for our part may shortly terminate would give umbrage to and arouse suspicions of Italian Government. We warmly appreciate motives inclining Turkish Government to give proposed unilateral assurances to us, but wish to urge in most friendly but emphatic manner that interests common to us and to them will be better served if they refrain from doing so.

What precedes will, I hope, make plain discrepancies between your line as described in paragraph 4 of your telegram No. 71 and our views and intentions. I approve your paragraph 5 and sections (1) and (2) of your paragraph 6. You should go slow as regards a Mediterranean Pact (your paragraph 6(3)) which existing circumstances do not allow us to contemplate. As regards your paragraph 7 I have no information beyond that contained in Belgrade telegram No. 72.¹⁰

Repeated to Rome No. 272, Athens No. 106, Belgrade No. 75 and to Bucharest No. 13 Saving.

¹⁰ This telegram from Mr. Balfour of July 17 referred to No. 445 and said that after presenting the peaceful assurances of the Italian Government to the Yugoslav Secretary-General of Foreign Affairs, the First Secretary of the Italian Legation had said that in view of the assurances contained in the memorandum 'the Italian Government considered period of uncertainty in the Mediterranean was at an end and that assurance which His Majesty's Government had recently given were [*sic*] consequently without further justification. Secretary-General had very properly pointed out that this verbal communication ought to be made to His Majesty's Government and not to Yugoslav Government when [*?* whom] it did not concern.'

No. 472

Mr. Eden to Mr. Newton (Berlin)

No. 152 Telegraphic [C 5350/4/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 21, 1936, 7 p.m.

I gave German Chargé d'Affaires this afternoon a copy of the *communiqué* issued today about Three-Power meeting in London.¹ I emphasized that

¹ Published in *The Times*, July 22, 1936, p. 16.

His Majesty's Government agreed fully with the language used to him by Sir R. Vansittart regarding the preliminary nature of the meeting (see my telegrams Nos. 145² and 151³). His Majesty's Government realised that substantial work would only be possible at a later and larger meeting, which London meeting would facilitate. I asked that the German Government would help us by refraining from criticism of the meeting, whose nature they now understood.

German Chargé d'Affaires replied that German attitude was one of watchfulness, perhaps attended by suspicion, but neither German Government nor Press were disposed to criticise the meeting until its outcome was known.

I said that this was all I asked of the German Government.

Repeated to Paris No. 182 and Brussels No. 17 Saving.

² No. 457.

³ This telegram to Mr. Newton of July 21 referred to a further enquiry by Prince Bismarck on July 17 about the proposed meeting; Sir R. Vansittart said that he could add nothing to what he had said on July 16, as reported in No. 457.

No. 473

Mr. Eden to Mr. Ingram¹ (Rome)

No. 897 [R 4372/294/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 21, 1936*

Sir,

I asked the Italian Chargé d'Affaires to come and see me this afternoon, when I handed him a copy of the *communiqué*² which is being issued this afternoon with respect to the meeting of the Three Power Conference to be held in London. I explained to Signor Vitetti that he would see from the *communiqué* that the three Powers regarded this meeting as a stage towards a later meeting. We fully realised that the important work would have to be done at the latter meeting, but nonetheless we hoped that this Three Power meeting would facilitate its being held. Signor Vitetti replied that his Government fully appreciated the situation. He had already explained it to them, and I understood that Count Ciano on the telephone last night had expressed approval of the method that we were endeavouring to pursue. Signor Vitetti added that he would repeat what I had said to Rome, though he was sure that they fully understood the position already. We agreed that Sir Robert Vansittart or I should see Signor Vitetti after the close of the meeting of the three Powers in London.

2. Signor Vitetti then handed me the attached Aide-Mémoire regarding the situation in the Mediterranean. He explained that Count Ciano had

¹ Mr. E. M. B. Ingram was Counsellor at H.M. Embassy at Rome, acting as Chargé d'Affaires.

² See No. 472, note 1.

already seen Sir Eric Drummond in Rome in this matter, but that he had as yet no account of what had passed between them. He understood, however, that the Italian Government were anxious to make their assurances public, and even to do so simultaneously with, or possibly even in advance of, any declaration that we might wish to make about the continuance of our unilateral declarations. I asked Signor Vitetti to thank Count Ciano for the Aide-Mémoire which I regarded as a helpful contribution. I said, however, that it would be better for us to meet again tomorrow afternoon, both because time was short to-day and because by that time we should both be fully informed of what had taken place in Rome.

I am, etc.,
ANTHONY EDEN

ENCLOSURE IN No. 473

Aide-Mémoire communicated by the Italian Chargé d'Affaires

AMBASCIATA D'ITALIA, July 17, 1936

Acting on instructions from Count Ciano, the Italian Ambassador at Ankara and the Italian Ministers at Belgrade and Athens respectively have approached the Turkish, Yugoslav and Greek Governments, and have given to each of these three Governments the most clear assurances that Italy has never contemplated, nor is contemplating, an aggressive action against any of them, in retaliation for their past sanctionist policy. No such danger—they have pointed out—exists or ever existed, and the hypothetical suggestion of an Italian attack is to be considered as absolutely unwarranted and unjustified.

In expressing these views, the Italian representatives at Ankara, Belgrade and Athens have also emphasized that Italy considers the sanction chapter as being completely and definitely over and that she looks confidently ahead towards the new period of mutual cooperation amongst all nations.

They have also recalled that between Italy and Greece and between Italy and Turkey, Treaties of Friendship are in existence with which Italy has never failed to comply, and which the Italian Government intend fully to respect. With Yugoslavia Italy intends no less to develop the same good relationship she enjoys with Turkey and Greece.

No. 474

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received July 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 475 Telegraphic [C 5404/4/18]

ROME, July 22, 1936, 1.25 a.m.

My French colleague tells me that to a specific question put by him to the Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday the latter stated that Italy

considered herself as a Locarno Power bound by her signature and would consequently fulfil obligations incumbent on her under the treaty. She did not however think it wise to attend any conference of Locarno Powers even of a preliminary character unless Germany were also invited to attend. Her position had been made clear in her reply to the Belgian invitation.¹ Count Ciano gave my colleague assurance that there was no general agreement between Italy and Germany nor any agreement on special points and in particular none with regard to Locarno. He seemed to think that question of Mediterranean assurances would be solved in the next few days.

Count Ciano did not believe there would be any important developments in international situation before September. He had not yet made up his mind whether conference of the five Powers, if it took place, should be held before or after meeting of Assembly; there were certain advantages in either course.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ Cf. No. 436.

No. 475

Sir M. Lampson (Cairo) to Mr. Eden (Received July 22, 10.45 a.m.)

No. 720 Telegraphic [J 6413/3249/1]

Immediate

CAIRO, July 22, 1936, 10.55 a.m. [sic]

Following from Khartoum No. 138 July 21st.

Begins: Following from Mr. Erskine telegram No. 134 July 21st for Foreign Office. Begins:

Important. Ras Imeru asks His Majesty's Government to inform Ethiopian Legation and the Emperor that he advises them to obtain conditions from the Italian Government for the surrender of the whole of Abyssinia as resistance is impossible owing to Galla and tribal attitude. The Ras states that he has sent by post a report and if the Emperor refuses then Ras Kassa will negotiate instead.¹

¹ Minutes on this file show that the Emperor was contemplating a return to Ethiopia. Sir S. Barton, who was on leave, asked Sir R. Vansittart in a conversation on July 16 whether there was any objection to his keeping in touch with the Emperor. Sir Robert said that he saw no objection but that Sir S. Barton should not regard himself 'as a liaison officer between us and the Emperor'. Sir S. Barton in the same conversation mentioned the possibility that the Emperor might wish to go to Gore. 'Sir R. Vansittart said that he hoped that this idea would not materialise, for it would probably mean throwing the Emperor's life away quite uselessly.' Other minutes show general support in the Foreign Office for this view. After reading the above telegram No. 720 Mr. Eden felt that Ras Imeru's message had altered the situation, and he directed that the Emperor should be asked whether, in the light of this message, he still wished the British Government to facilitate his return to Western Abyssinia via the Sudan. A letter in these terms was sent to Sir S. Barton on July 24. The Emperor did not persist in the plan.

Record of conversation between British, French, and Belgian Ministers at No. 10, Downing Street, on Thursday, July 23, 1936, at 10.30 a.m.

[C 5449/4/18]

PRESENT: *Great Britain*: Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Eden, Lord Halifax, Sir R. Vansittart, Mr. Sargent, Mr. Strang.

France: M. Yvon Delbos, M. Corbin, M. Léger, M. Massigli, M. de Margerie.

Belgium: M. van Zeeland, M. Spaak, Baron de Cartier de Marchienne, Baron van Zuylen, Vicomte de Lantsheere, M. de Meeus.

MR. BALDWIN welcomed the French and Belgian Delegations on behalf of His Majesty's Government. British opinion, he said, warmly welcomed a meeting from which everyone was hopeful that good would come, and which would represent a real effort for the pacification of Europe. He believed that the French and Belgian Governments shared these views, and he proposed that the meeting should get to work in this spirit.

M. VAN ZEELAND and M. DELBOS thanked Mr. Baldwin for his welcome and said that they were in complete agreement with him in their desire for positive collaboration in the constructive work for which the meeting had been called.

Text of draft communiqué

MR. EDEN suggested that the discussion should be opened upon the draft *Communiqué* (see Annex) which was already in the hands of the three delegations, and that it should then pass to matters of a more general character.

The first and second paragraphs of the *communiqué* were then read in English and French and accepted without comment.

As regards paragraph 3, M. DELBOS had some observations to make upon the second sentence. The French Delegation quite agreed with the substance of this sentence, but he recalled that in the draft which the French Government had presented the order of ideas had been inverted. The French Government wished for an agreement upon a wide basis. There were a number of questions, such for example as that of fortifications, which ought not to be excluded from the scope of negotiations. The English draft seemed to him to be too limitative in this respect. The French draft, on the other hand, left open the possibility of agreement on other things than the Rhine-land Pact. In particular they did not wish to exclude the possibility of obtaining some limitation in the matter of fortifications. M. Delbos proposed a compromise text to meet this point.

MR. EDEN said that it had never been the intention of His Majesty's Government to exclude the question of fortifications from the discussion. The only objection he had to the original French draft was that it seemed to establish two periods for the negotiations, the first dealing with fortifications

and the second with the Rhineland Pact. The British view was that it would only be possible to deal with fortifications as part of the question of the Rhineland Pact itself.

M. DELBOS observed that if the new Rhineland Pact was to provide for mutual assistance alone it was difficult to see how the question of fortifications could be dealt with in it.

M. VAN ZEELAND proposed the adoption of M. Delbos' compromise text. He thought that the new agreement might include several points and that it might be best to deal with them in separate diplomatic instruments. One might take the place of Locarno, and another could deal with other outstanding points. The French text left the way open for certain possibilities which it was not possible to see clearly at the present stage, since the proposal was not merely to establish a new Treaty of Locarno but to resolve all other questions raised by the German action of the 7th March.

MR. EDEN explained that, speaking quite frankly, his chief preoccupation was the effect which this proposed text would have upon those who were absent from the meeting. He quite agreed that it might be found necessary to conclude a number of separate agreements. His chief aim was, however, to get all outstanding matters cleared up at one and the same time. In his view, the effect of the word 'thus' in the draft was to make it clear that the object of negotiation would be a comprehensive settlement.

After some discussion it was agreed that the word 'thus' should be omitted and that the sentence in question should read as follows:

'The first business to be undertaken should, in their opinion, be to negotiate a new agreement to take the place of the Rhineland pact of Locarno and to resolve the situation created by the German initiative of the 7th March.'

LORD HALIFAX suggested that some innocuous words, such for example as 'through the collaboration of all concerned', should be inserted after the word 'resolve'. He made this proposal with an eye to those who were not present. He thought it important the three Powers should protect themselves against any false interpretation of the *communiqué*, which would suggest that they were coming forward with a firm plan to which the other two Powers would have to put their names, whereas in fact the matter was open for free discussion.

Lord Halifax's suggestion was adopted.

The paragraph numbered (4) was then read.

M. DELBOS said that he had no proposal to make in the text, but he would suggest, for reasons of logic, that the last paragraph of the *communiqué* should be numbered (4) and inserted before the present paragraph (4). This would put the invitation to Germany and Italy in its proper place.

M. Delbos' suggestion was adopted.

Discussion then turned to the second and third sub-paragraphs of the original paragraph (3), which had now been re-numbered (5) and (6).

After a number of minor consequential amendments had been made,

M. DELBOS observed that the general settlement which was contemplated could not be reached without the participation of all the interested Powers. In the existing draft, although it was expressly stated that there would be an eventual extension of the area of discussion, nothing was said about any extension in the number of participating Powers. It was to be feared, therefore, that the *communiqué* in its present form might create the impression that the future of the world was to be settled at a conference of three or of five Powers. In his view, paragraph (6) ought to contain an express mention of the necessity for the participation of all the Powers concerned in the negotiation of the general settlement.

He suggested, therefore, that the words 'with the collaboration of the interested Powers' should be inserted after the word 'facilitate' in paragraph (6).

MR. EDEN wondered whether this was not looking rather too far ahead. He quite understood M. Delbos' preoccupation, and he quite agreed with him that there could be no question of drawing up a general settlement without the participation of the interested Powers. But it seemed to him that the present text sufficiently met this point. The word 'facilitate' seemed to him to meet all objections. It was surely implicit in the existing text that there was no intention to settle the fate of the universe at a meeting of three or five Powers. His fear was that if they now definitely visualised a larger conference, it would make the holding of a five-Power conference more difficult.

M. DELBOS entirely agreed that nothing should be done to discourage those who were not present. But Herr Hitler himself, in his own proposals, had not excluded the participation of other Powers in a general settlement. The text now proposed by the French Delegation had nothing in it which the Chancellor himself had not said. Furthermore, there were other absentees in addition to the two Locarno Powers, such for example as the Powers which might be termed 'juxta-Locarno Powers'. The suggestion that the word 'facilitate' was sufficient to meet his objection was perhaps rather too subtle. He apologised for insisting, but he saw very serious objection to the text as it at present stood.

MR. EDEN said that what worried him was the reception which the *communiqué* would have in Germany. If the *communiqué* opened out the prospect of a European conference or a great world conference, Germans would argue that it could lead nowhere. He thought it important to guard against this.

M. DELBOS thought that it would be difficult to exclude Czechoslovakia and Poland, seeing that they had been associated with the Locarno agreements. In addition, the French Government had to take account of parliamentary considerations. The meaning of the *communiqué* would have to be explained in public, and the question of the participation of the other interested Powers would certainly be raised and could not be evaded. Parliament would certainly not accept the revival of a four-Power Pact or any plan for a European directorate.

Various suggestions having been made with a view to meeting this difficulty, MR. EDEN repeated that what was preoccupying him was the thought that the readers of the *communiqué* might think that the three Powers were not merely making preparations for a forthcoming five-Power meeting but were trying to lay down in advance what was to be the character of a further meeting which would have to take place at some later stage. The old familiar accusation of dictation was to be feared.

M. SPAAK said that according to the *communiqué* itself, whether or not there would be a second larger conference would depend upon whether or not the five-Power conference was a success. The three Powers were not alone concerned.

MR. EDEN proposed a draft which, however, appeared to M. Delbos not to take sufficient account of the principle of collective security.

M. DELBOS said that the new French Parliament and the present French government were more firmly attached to this system than their predecessors. It seemed to him that the *communiqué*, as proposed by the British Delegation, was in danger of neglecting the interests of the powers who were not signatories to the Locarno Treaties. Any such suggestion would at once raise parliamentary difficulties in France.

After a long discussion, during which a number of drafts were proposed and rejected, agreement was finally reached upon the following text of the new paragraphs (5) and (6), which would be submitted once more to the meeting when it resumed in the afternoon:

‘(5) If progress can be made at this meeting, other matters affecting European peace will, in their opinion, naturally come under discussion.

(6) The representatives of the three Powers, so far as they are concerned, accordingly look forward to the eventual widening of the area of the discussion in such a manner as to facilitate, with the collaboration of the other interested Powers, the settlement of those problems the solution of which is essential to the peace of Europe.’

(The meeting adjourned at 12.30 p.m.)

ANNEX TO NO. 476

Draft Communiqué

The Representatives of France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, having met in on

Mindful of the arrangement of the 19th March,¹ of the proposals of the German Chancellor of the 31st March,² and of those of the French Government of the 8th April,³ have arrived at the following conclusions:

(1) The main purpose to which the efforts of all European nations must be directed is to consolidate peace by means of a general settlement.

(2) Such a settlement can only be achieved by the free co-operation of all the Powers concerned, and nothing would be more fatal to the hopes of

¹ See No. 144.

² See No. 193, note 2.

³ See No. 217, note 2.

such a settlement than the division, apparent or real, of Europe into opposing blocs.

(3) The three Powers, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom, accordingly consider that steps should be taken to arrange a meeting of the five Locarno Powers as soon as such a meeting can conveniently be held. The first business to be undertaken should, in their opinion, be to negotiate a new agreement to take the place of the Rhine Pact of Locarno, and thus liquidate the situation created by the German initiative of the 7th March.

If progress could be made under this head other matters affecting European peace will, in their opinion, naturally come under discussion.

The Representatives of the three Powers would accordingly look forward to the widening of the area of the discussion in such a manner as to facilitate the general settlement of those problems the solution of which they conceive to be essential to the peace of Europe.

The three Governments accordingly propose to enter into communication with the German and Italian Governments with a view to obtaining their participation in the meeting thus proposed.

No. 477

Record of conversation between British, French, and Belgian Ministers at No. 10, Downing Street, on Thursday, July 23, 1936, at 3.30 p.m.

[C 5450/4/18]

PRESENT: *Great Britain*: Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Eden, Lord Halifax, Sir R. Vansittart, Mr. Sargent, Mr. Strang.

France: M. Léon Blum, M. Yvon Delbos, M. Corbin, M. Léger, M. Massigli, M. de Margerie.

Belgium: M. van Zeeland, M. Spaak, Baron de Cartier de Marchienne, Baron van Zuylen, Vicomte de Lantsheere, M. de Meeus.

Text of Draft Communiqué

Some further discussion took place on the terms of the draft text which had been provisionally agreed upon at the meeting earlier in the day.¹

At M. VAN ZEELAND's suggestion the two final paragraphs of the draft text were run together so as to form the fifth and last paragraph of the *communiqué* in its revised form. In M. van Zeeland's view it was undesirable that the *communiqué* should speak expressly of the three Powers when dealing with the question of the widening of the area of discussion. This would be a matter for the five Powers as a whole if progress was made at the contemplated Five-Power meeting, and not for the three Powers only. He therefore suggested that this part of the *communiqué* should be drafted in a more impersonal manner.

¹ See No. 476.

It was ultimately agreed that paragraphs 5 and 6 of the draft *communiqué* should be replaced by a single paragraph, numbered 5, in the following terms:

‘(5) If progress can be made at this meeting, other matters affecting European peace will necessarily come under discussion. In such circumstances, it would be natural to look forward to the widening of the area of the discussion in such a manner as to facilitate, with the collaboration of the other interested Powers, the settlement of those problems the solution of which is essential to the peace of Europe.’

As thus amended, the draft *communiqué* was accepted by the three delegations.

General Discussion

M. BLUM said that he would ask liberty to make a few general observations. He was much alarmed by the present state of affairs in Europe. The whole idea of collective security had suffered a severe setback, and the reaction in Europe to the threats to existing security had been weak. All nations desired to work for peace. In France, in particular, the will to peace was strong and unanimous.

The present situation in Europe was very different from the situation in 1925 when the Locarno treaties had been negotiated. At that time it was generally believed that the peace of Europe depended upon a Franco-German *rapprochement*. The German Constitution was at that time very different from what it now was. So far as the Rhineland Zone was concerned, it was then considered that the Locarno Treaty alone gave a guarantee of stability. Although the situation had now changed, the desire of the French people for good relations with Germany remained unchanged. But in present circumstances a Franco-German arrangement guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy was not sufficient. The European question was no longer a Franco-German question. Peace was indivisible, and special settlements of various kinds were now necessary. This, however, was no reason for bringing an element of distrust into the work that was now proceeding. While it was desirable not to forget the past, it was more desirable to pursue the common will for peace.

He did not wish to revert to the history of the past three months, but it ought to be realised that there had been a complete change in the situation between France and Germany, if not a juridical change then certainly a political change. Since the events of the 7th March, there had been the arrangements of March 19th,² the letters of the 1st April,³ the British questionnaire⁴ (to which there had been no reply). There had also been developments in another part of Europe which, although they might superficially appear to be favourable, might yet be full of menace for the future. There was the Danzig situation too. Bearing these facts in mind, he had every right to insist that the mere fact that the French Government were now ready to

² See No. 144.

³ See No. 199.

⁴ See No. 307.

place themselves upon the basis of the *communiqué* to which they had just agreed, bore witness to the will and ardent desire of France for the establishment of peace.

MR. EDEN said that His Majesty's Government were also preoccupied by the European situation. They therefore were all the more grateful for the spirit which the French and Belgian delegations had shown in agreeing to the *communiqué*, the terms of which had just been settled.

He recalled that in March, after the occupation of the Rhineland, His Majesty's Government had agreed to certain proposals which they had confirmed in letters dated April 1st. His Majesty's Government stood by everything they then said. He himself had made it clear in the House of Commons and in the documents referred to that in the event of an unprovoked aggression upon the territory of France or Belgium Great Britain would stand by her engagements. Nothing in this respect had changed. His Majesty's Government stood by what they had said.

Unfortunately the dangers in Europe were not confined to the Western frontiers of Germany. It was for that reason that His Majesty's Government were anxious for a European settlement. He was therefore in close agreement with what M. Blum had said.

M. VAN ZEELAND expressed full agreement with the statements which had been made by M. Blum and Mr. Eden. He was particularly glad to hear Mr. Eden's reaffirmation of the obligations of Great Britain towards France and Belgium and his assertion of the interest of His Majesty's Government in a European settlement as a corollary to the conclusion of a Western treaty.

M. DELBOS then raised two questions.

In the first place he recalled that Herr Hitler had said that if after a period of four months no settlement had been concluded he would regain his liberty of action.⁵ That period expired on the 1st August next. It was quite possible that on that date Herr Hitler might repeat the operation of the 7th March. Although the Olympic Games might be a deterrent, there was some warrant (such as newspaper articles and preparations in regard to barracks) for thinking that this possibility was not excluded. Even if there were only two chances in a hundred of this happening the possibility ought to be considered.

In the second place M. Delbos thought that consideration ought to be given to the course to be pursued in the event of a failure of the present attempt to achieve a Five Power meeting.

MR. EDEN doubted whether any drastic German action on the 1st August was likely. In any event M. Delbos' version of what Herr Hitler had said was not quite accurate. What Herr Hitler had said was that he gave an assurance that he would not proceed to any larger reoccupation of the Zone during the four months' period. This was not quite the same thing. If, however, such an eventuality occurred, he was bound to ask the French Government what they themselves would do and what they would like others to do.

⁵ Cf. No. 193.

As regards the second point, he thought it would be a pity to contemplate any such eventuality now. The effect upon Germany would be unfortunate if it were thought that they were considering in detail now what was to be done if the Five Power meeting never took place. In any event, he would repeat that the engagements which Great Britain had undertaken still stood, and if the result which M. Delbos feared actually came about, His Majesty's Government would of course be prepared to discuss it with the other Powers concerned.

M. DELBOS thought that a further reoccupation of the Zone might take place in one of two ways. If it took place by gradual infiltration the effect on French public opinion might not be serious. If, on the other hand, there were a *coup de théâtre* the Powers would be in a ridiculous position if they were still offering Germany the possibility of friendly conversations.

MR. EDEN thought that a *coup de théâtre* was unlikely, especially in view of the *communiqué* that was about to be issued and of the invitation which was going to Germany. The Germans were at present busily engaged in trying to persuade British public opinion that they were the quietest people in the world, in preparation for the Olympic Games.

In this connexion Mr. Eden said that he had been keeping the German Government informed of what had been proceeding, and he proposed on the following day to inform the German and Italian Governments of what had been the object of the present meeting and the steps that had been taken by the three Governments in order to achieve that object.

M. DELBOS suggested that when making this communication it should be indicated to the German Government that the present operation was a prolongation of the period of conciliation, and that the three Powers were therefore entitled to expect them to refrain from any new military act in the interval between now and the meeting of the conference.

MR. EDEN thought that it might be well to explain to the German Government that the three Governments had all made a contribution towards European peace, and that it was the duty of all governments concerned to do what they could to reduce temperature and relax tension in Europe in the interval.

Communication to German and Italian Governments

After some discussion, it was agreed that instructions should be sent that evening to the Ambassadors of the three Powers in Berlin and Rome to communicate jointly to the German and Italian Governments respectively copies of the conclusions of the present meeting, and to express the hope that it might be possible shortly to fix by general agreement a date upon which the Five-Power meeting should be held.

Date of proposed Five-Power Meeting

M. VAN ZEELAND said that he felt strongly that the Five-Power meeting ought to be held before and not after the meeting of the League Assembly in September. Any failure on the part of the League Assembly to come to

successful conclusions might have a disastrous effect upon any subsequent Five-Power meeting.

M. BLUM agreed with M. van Zeeland.

There was general agreement that there would be considerable practical difficulty in holding a meeting in the early part of September; but as it was realised that there was no possibility of securing a further postponement of the meeting of the Assembly (which was due to meet on September 21st), there seemed to be no alternative to a Five-Power meeting in the early part of September if such a meeting were to be suggested.

Publication of the Communiqué

The respective advantages and disadvantages of publishing the *communiqué* immediately the same evening, or of postponing publication until the following day, was [*sic*] then considered.

MR. EDEN thought that if the *communiqué* were not published at once, an impression might get abroad that there had not been complete agreement. In any event there was nothing in the *communiqué* offensive to Germany, and Germany could not reasonably object if the *communiqué* were published before the invitation was actually received. The *communiqué* itself was not an invitation, but a decision to issue an invitation. Any delay in publication would give mischief-makers their chance.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the *communiqué* should be issued to the press the same evening, with a statement to the effect that steps had already been taken to advise the German and Italian Governments and to issue invitations to them.

Concluding observations

M. BLUM said that the three Powers could congratulate themselves upon the result of their meeting. The agreement was not one of mere texts, but of thought and sentiment.

Reverting to M. Delbos' two questions, he said that he did not think that a *coup de théâtre* in the Rhineland on August 1st was very probable, and it was less probable in view of the *communiqué* and the joint invitation. But the improbable sometimes happened, and if it did happen he would be lacking in frankness if he did not say that it would be impossible for France not to react in some way to a *coup de théâtre*. They could do no less in view of their public opinion.

He did not himself wish to contemplate the possibility of failure to achieve a Five-Power meeting. He himself wanted to have confidence in success. But if there should be failure, it was natural that the Powers concerned would have to consider the question together. And in that connexion he would merely recall Mr. Eden's assurance that the arrangements of March 19th and April 1st still stood. It was unnecessary for him to say more.

If the Five Powers did succeed, they would be doing a service not only to their own countries but to the whole of Europe, in circumstances which would be more critical than they had been for many years past.

M. VAN ZEELAND associated himself with what Mr. Eden and M. Blum had said and welcomed the spirit in which the meeting had been conducted and brought to a happy conclusion.

No. 478

Mr. Runciman (Board of Trade) to Mr. Eden

[C 5567/99/18]

BOARD OF TRADE, *July 23, 1936*

My dear Anthony,

I have been considering your letter of the 17th July¹ in which you make some suggestions about our economic policy in order to ease the present political situation. Some of the proposals you put forward as suitable for examination by an Interdepartmental Committee of Officials seem to me to be a complete reversal of the policy pursued by this Government since 1931. The policies of Imperial Preference and moderate protection in the home market have twice been endorsed by the Electorate—in 1931 and in 1935. I do not see how proposals to abandon these policies could be put before Parliament and the country now by us. If, on the other hand, as part of a general bargain by which the people of this country were assured of a firm prospect of peace for some years to come, this country were asked to reconsider its economic policy, then I think it might be possible to do something. But an 'initiative' on the lines you suggest would, in my opinion, only create trouble for us at home without securing any real advantage abroad.²

I am sending copies of this to the Ministers to whom you sent copies of your letter.

Yours ever,
WALTER RUNCIMAN

¹ No. 463.

² Minutes by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Sargent, and Sir A. Cadogan (who had returned from his post as H.M. Ambassador at Peking and became Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on October 1, 1936) said that the matter ought not to be pigeon-holed. It was referred to Mr. Eden on his return from holiday in August. He wrote on August 30 that a reply from Mr. Chamberlain had been received, and that the matter had been 'mentioned, though hardly discussed' at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet in the previous week. He doubted whether it was any use pursuing the matter at the forthcoming meeting of the cabinet in the absence of both Mr. Runciman and Mr. Chamberlain. On September 15 Sir R. Vansittart 'directed that this matter should be let alone for the time being'.

No. 479

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received July 24, 12.15 p.m.)

No. 229 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5452/4/18]

BERLIN, July 24, 1936

Your telegram No. 158.¹

Communication was jointly made by French Ambassador, Belgian Minister and myself at 11 o'clock to the head of the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Herr Dieckhoff, who is in charge of the Ministry in the absence of Baron von Neurath.

We explained that it was the desire of the three governments that the German Government should be informed of the conclusions reached at the earliest possible moment and in fact that our instructions had been to make the communication even last night had that been possible.

The French Ambassador took the view that observations accompanying the *communiqué* should be placed on record in writing. I thought it well to do the same and I accordingly handed in a note the text of which is contained in my immediately following telegram.²

¹ Foreign Office telegram No. 158 of July 23 instructed Mr. Newton, jointly with his French and Belgian colleagues, to communicate the conclusions of the three-power meetings (Nos. 476 and 477) held in London that day. The text of these conclusions was forwarded in the immediately following telegram from the Foreign Office to Mr. Newton, No. 159 of even date. He was to express the hope that the government to which he was accredited would accept the invitation to a five-power conference, and that a date for this could shortly be fixed. An identical telegram (No. 282) was sent to Mr. Ingram at Rome.

² No. 480 below.

No. 480

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received July 24, 12.15 p.m.)¹

No. 230 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5453/4/18]

BERLIN, July 24, 1936

Following is communication referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.²

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires presents his compliments to His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs and has the honour under instructions from His Majesty's principal Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to communicate the text of the conclusions of the meeting between the representatives of France, Belgium and the United Kingdom held in London on the 23rd July, 1936.

2. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires has been instructed to express the hope that the German Government will accept the invitation to the proposed

¹ The time of receipt of this telegram was given in error as '12.15 a.m.'.

² No. 479.

five Power conference and that it may be possible shortly to fix by agreement the date on which the conference should take place.

No. 481

Mr. Newton (Berlin) to Mr. Eden (Received July 24, 1.10 p.m.)

No. 231 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5463/4/18]

BERLIN, July 24, 1936

My telegram No. 229¹ and my telegram No. 230.²

Herr Dieckhoff who was prepared for our communication promised to submit it to his government forthwith. He said that while he could not of course give an immediate answer on their behalf he was sure that our communication would be well received. The matters were such as required careful consideration but the objects we had in view were evidently the same.

When we were drafting a *communiqué* to be issued at midday by German Ministry of Foreign Affairs Herr Dieckhoff did not wish to commit himself officially to a statement but our objects were identic, having regard particularly to paragraph 5 of conclusions.

He seemed to think so far as Germany was concerned the conference could take place some time in September. Substance of *communiqué* on which we agreed is given in my immediately following telegram.³

¹ No. 479.

² No. 480.

³ Not printed: cf. *D.G.F.P.*, *op. cit.*, No. 474, note 5. Further documents relating to the proposed five-power meeting will be printed in Volume XVII. Herr von Neurath told the representatives of the three powers on July 31 that the German Government accepted the invitation to the conference, which should be thoroughly prepared through the diplomatic channels. He and the three representatives did not think that the meeting could take place before mid October; *D.G.F.P.*, *ibid.*, No. 489.

No. 482

Mr. Ingram (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received July 24, 2.38 p.m.)

No. 491 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5464/4/18]

ROME, July 24, 1936

Your telegrams Nos. 281¹ and 282.²

After comparing the text of our instructions the French Ambassador, Belgian Chargé d'Affaires and myself were received by Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning at 11 a.m. We each left with him an *aide-mémoire*³ in

¹ Not printed. It instructed him to arrange an interview with Count Ciano in view of telegram No. 282 (No. 479, note 1).

² See note 1.

³ Not printed.

the sense of our instructions covering the text of the conclusions of the three Power meeting held in London yesterday. The French Ambassador explained to Count Ciano in the most friendly manner the object of our visit and expressed the hope that the invitation contained in the London *communiqué* would be accepted by the Italian Government and that it would be possible shortly to fix by agreement the date of the conference.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs thanked us for this communication which he undertook to communicate immediately to the head of the Government. For himself he declared that in principle he did not anticipate any difficulty with regard to Italian acceptance of the invitation, seeing that the obstacles which had hitherto necessitated the abstention of his country were now either disposed of or on the point of removal. He undertook shortly to give us official answer, giving us to understand that he was only awaiting the removal *de facto* of the final difficulties in the Mediterranean, a matter which he had every reason to believe would shortly be realised. As regards the date of the suggested conference he would await our proposals. He finally expressed his pleasure at seeing the possibility of Italy once more co-operating in a spirit of collaboration and friendship in the work of European peace and security.

No. 483

Sir M. Lampson (Cairo) to Mr. Eden (Received July 25, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 738 Telegraphic [J 6571/2/16]

Immediate

CAIRO, July 24, 1936, 11.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 733.¹

Texts of military clauses were initialled by Nahas Pasha and myself at Zafaran at 7 p.m. this evening.

2. In declaring acceptance by Egyptian delegation Nahas Pasha once more emphasized that, as already agreed, Treaty was a[n] inter-dependent whole and that nothing was binding short of total agreement. I replied that such was precisely our attitude also. (Mohammed Mahmoud in agreeing to accept the military texts had insisted with Nahas Pasha that he must be free to go back on his consent failing satisfaction over both Sudan and capitulations). Nahas Pasha continued with expression of gratitude to the British Government and to yourself in particular, for responsive way in which you had throughout received Egyptian representations. He felt assured that similar responsive spirit would be shown over the remaining items.

¹ Conversations over the Anglo-Egyptian treaty had been resumed in Cairo on July 1, following the discussions in London in June (cf. No. 354, note 13). The two delegations had found much to argue about in the draft. In telegram No. 733 of July 23 Sir M. Lampson reported that the prospect of initialling the text of the military clauses was slightly better than it had appeared during the previous few days.

3. In my reply I expressed suitable sentiments and ended with the hope that the remaining items could be disposed of quickly so that delegation could be welcomed for signature in London by His Majesty's Government. I then handed in without comment, text of Sudan clauses.

4. Text of *communiqué* to the press is contained in my immediately following telegram.²

5. As heat of Cairo is now oppressive we have arranged to meet in Alexandria on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday returning to Cairo to continue on Thursday: this is necessary as Egyptian Ministers have to attend to their parliamentary duties.³

² Not printed.

³ The clauses dealing with the Sudan were initialled on July 31. The civil clauses, initialled on August 12, dealt with such questions as the protection of minorities in Egypt and the capitulatory system. These caused relatively little dispute. Several problems, such as that of the capitulations (which was dealt with at the Montreux Conference of 1937), were, however, deferred. The Treaty of Alliance between the United Kingdom and Egypt was signed in London on August 26, 1936. Ratifications were exchanged on December 22, 1936. A convenient summary of its provisions by Mr. Somers Cocks, a Second Secretary in the Egyptian Department, is printed as Appendix V below. The full text of the treaty is printed as Cmd. 5360, *Treaty Series No. 6* (1937).

No. 484

Conclusions of the fourth meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy held at No. 10, Downing Street, on July 27, 1936, at 11 a.m.

F.P. (36) [C 5822/97/18]

PRESENT: Mr. S. Baldwin (*in the Chair*); Mr. J. R. MacDonald, Mr. N. Chamberlain, Sir J. Simon, Mr. A. Eden, Lord Halifax, Mr. M. MacDonald, Mr. W. Ormsby-Gore, Sir S. Hoare, Sir T. Inskip, Sir M. P. A. Hankey (Secretary).

1. In pursuance of F.P. (36) 3rd Conclusions, Minute 2,¹ the Committee had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Paper F.P. (36) 7)² covering a draft statement of policy on the transfer of a Colonial mandate or mandates to Germany.³

¹ The third meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy took place on July 21, 1936, at 10 Downing Street, and included the first of two discussions on the report of the Plymouth Committee (see Appendix III to this Volume); the Earl of Plymouth was present at this meeting. The minute referred to is apparently the following, drawn up after a somewhat inconclusive discussion as to how best to express the unwillingness of the Cabinet to consider colonial concessions to Germany: 'That [a] draft statement should be circulated, if possible before the weekend, for consideration at a meeting to be held at No. 10 Downing Street, on Monday, July 27th, 1936, at 11 a.m.' The minutes of the meeting on July 21 are filed as C 5973/97/18.

² Not printed (C 5822/97/18).

³ The statement was to be included by Mr. Eden in a speech in the House of Commons that afternoon; see note 9 below.

MR. EDEN drew attention to the wording of the first and second sentences of the second paragraph of the draft statement, and after some discussion it was agreed that these sentences should be revised to read as follows:

‘I should like first to revert for a moment to a subject which of late has, as it were, grown up alongside that question, and that is, whether any arrangements are necessary or desirable for giving foreign countries freer access to such raw materials as are produced in mandated territories and colonies.’

SIR SAMUEL HOARE suggested that it might be well to refer in the statement to what he had said in his speech at the League Assembly on September 11th, 1935,⁴ to the effect that the question was causing discontent and anxiety and that the wise course was to investigate it to see what proposals there might be for dealing with it, and what is the real scope of the trouble, and if the trouble is substantial to try to remove it.

LORD HALIFAX thought that before an attempt was made to draft the statement, it would be desirable to see whether the members of the Committee were agreed on the conclusions contained in the last paragraph of F.P. (36)7. He himself regarded these conclusions with great apprehension and would be very reluctant indeed to subscribe to them. In his view they went considerably further than the Committee, or at any rate some members of it, had been prepared to go at the previous meeting. The concluding sentence of the statement⁵ closed the door on any possible transfer of a mandate hereafter, and he feared that as soon as the statement was known in Germany, the German Government would decline to enter into discussions with us on any of the outstanding questions. If a statement was made in these terms, Hitler could only refrain from raising the question by exposing himself to the criticism of those Germans who were pressing for a return of her Colonies to Germany that he was submitting to British dictation.

Lord Halifax then read to the Committee the following draft which he had prepared of those parts of the draft statement dealing with the transfer of Mandates:

1. Not prepared to add in substance to what has previously been said: the posing and answering of hypothetical questions open to strong objection.
2. Obvious that the question is one that affects other British Dominions and other foreign countries, and we have not had any consultation with them upon it.
3. But so far as H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] are concerned, the question of any transfer of Colonial sovereignty over mandated

⁴ Volume XIV, Appendix IV.

⁵ It said that in answer to ‘the plain question: have His Majesty’s Government any intention of contemplating a possible transfer of their mandates, I say that they still see as great obstacles to any such idea as they have consistently seen in the past and that it would be impossible for them to contemplate any such transfer’.

territories would inevitably raise difficulties—legal, moral, political—to which H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] must frankly say they do not at present see any solution.

4. And, therefore, whilst it is clearly in the power of any nation to raise these issues at any time, and while we could certainly not refuse to discuss any of them, H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] hope that with so many other grave questions still unsolved, but with new opportunity of advance to their solution having been afforded during the last few days, there will in no quarter be the desire at this time to introduce further grave causes of difference between nations.
5. Moreover, the most imperative need of the world to-day is for remedy in the economic field—(Continue as in draft).

This draft would give Hitler a clear indication that we were not prepared to accede to Germany's demand and that it would be most inadvisable for him to raise this particular issue at the present time. He would thus be enabled to explain to his own people that the subject was one of very great difficulty and that the consideration of it had better be deferred until other and more important issues of interest to Germany were disposed of.

MR. EDEN said that from the purely Foreign Office point of view he would have much preferred to have refrained from making any reference to this question in his speech in the House of Commons that afternoon, but the Parliamentary situation would not permit of this course, and the Government had been placed in a position of great embarrassment by the attitude on the question of their own supporters. If the question was to be mentioned in his speech, the Foreign Office thought that we ought to be as clear and definite as possible. An indefinite pronouncement at this juncture would satisfy no-one, certainly not public opinion at home or Germany, and Hitler would be confirmed in his view that it was only necessary for him to continue to exercise pressure upon us in order to obtain his way. It was true that the proposed statement might have reactions in Germany, but in the view of the Foreign Office there was no reason to suppose that if it was made Germany would refuse to negotiate a new Locarno Agreement.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that it was essential that the question should be dealt with in Mr. Eden's speech that afternoon. When, in company with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had recently seen a Deputation on the subject, he had explained that the Government had very good reasons for wishing, particularly at the present moment, to keep this question in the background and to damp down discussion upon it. His words had had no effect and the Motion on the speech had the support of about 130 M.P.s.⁶

SIR SAMUEL HOARE asked whether it was really necessary to say in so many words that it would be impossible for His Majesty's Government to contemplate the transfer of their mandates. As he had pointed out at the previous Meeting, this would mean in effect that there could be no territorial adjustment benefiting Germany, either in Europe or in Africa.

⁶ Cf. 315 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., col. 1086.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN said that he, like Lord Halifax, was gravely alarmed by the wording of the proposed conclusions which, in his view, would produce the worst possible effect in Germany. Even if the Germans consented to come to the proposed Five-Power Meeting, they would come in a sulky and disgruntled frame of mind. He saw no reason for putting our point of view in such blunt and definite terms. This was a matter in which it was very necessary to proceed with great caution, and it would be a thousand pities to spoil the successful outcome of last week's Three Power Meeting in London just when that meeting had received almost unanimous approval abroad.

MR. ORMSBY-GORE pointed out that public interest and excitement on the subject was on the increase. The Motion on the subject had the support of over 130 M.P.s headed by Sir Austen Chamberlain, and he was bombarded with letters from missionaries and others.

MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD asked whether, if the declaration suggested in F.P. (36)⁷ was made, it was certain that we could carry it out. Suppose that it was possible to open serious negotiations with Germany. Were we then going to say that in no circumstances would we entertain proposals for the transfer to Germany of our mandates? It was possible that Germany regarded this Colonial question as one of very great importance, and if so it would be a very serious matter for the Government to commit themselves to a policy which they could not see their way to carry out.

MR. ORMSBY-GORE said that he had discussed the matter with Lord Lugard,⁷ who had expressed very strong views indeed against any transfer of the mandate for Tanganyika. There was good authority for the view that the answers given on the subject in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister⁸ had caused great uncertainty in Germany, and had increased Hitler's difficulties with his own extremists. German public opinion was disposed to take the line that if we were not going to hand back the mandates to Germany, the sooner we said so the better. If we confined the statement to a refusal to part with the Tanganyika mandate, this would be interpreted as meaning that we were prepared to consider transferring our other mandates; but our other mandates related mainly to those ex-German colonies, most of the territory of which was under French mandate. To take this line would therefore raise serious difficulties with France, and would be likely to still further embitter Franco-German relations. Unless a statement, much more definite than any made hitherto, could be issued in regard to Tanganyika, the position would be very serious.

MR. MALCOLM MACDONALD thought that public opinion would support the Government in adopting a cautious attitude towards this subject at the present juncture, and would be critical of any definite closing of the door. He, therefore, favoured a statement on the lines proposed by Lord Halifax, in which without definitely closing the door we should give a hint to Hitler that we saw very great difficulty in meeting German claims in this respect.

⁷ British Member of the League of Nations Mandates Commission since 1922.

⁸ Cf. No. 286, note 2.

It might, of course, be necessary at some later stage to give Germany a definite refusal.

SIR JOHN SIMON inquired whether it might be desirable to refer in the statement to Hitler's own pronouncement to the effect that he was not raising the Colonial issue.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN thought that it would be unwise to mention Hitler's name in this connection. Germany was only too ready to take offence when none was intended. He agreed with Mr. Malcolm MacDonald that public opinion would favour a cautious attitude on the part of the Government, and would be very suspicious of a policy which might savour of French instigation. He fully agreed with Lord Halifax's suggestions for revising the statement.

MR. ORMSBY-GORE observed that public opinion would also be very upset at any suggestion for handing over the natives in the mandated territories to Nazi control.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN said that he wished to raise a point on the expression arising from currency difficulties on the second page of F.P. (36)7. These words were very dangerous. There were only two possible remedies; first, a reformation of the German currency system, which was a matter for Germany herself; and secondly, that we should lend Germany money, in which event there was nothing of course to prevent her from spending it on re-armament.

After some further discussion, Mr. EDEN said that he had been persuaded by what had been said at the Meeting to accept Lord Halifax's draft, subject to certain alterations.

The Committee agreed to adjourn so as to enable Lord Halifax, Mr. Eden and Mr. Ormsby-Gore to prepare a revised draft statement.

The Committee resumed at 12.45 p.m., and had before them copies of the revised draft statement which had been prepared in the interval. Certain minor alterations were suggested and adopted, and the Committee agreed:

That in his speech that afternoon on the Foreign Office vote, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should include a reference to the transfer of a Colonial mandate or mandates to Germany in the terms of the statement of policy as finally agreed at the Meeting (for the text of which see Appendix to these Conclusions).

APPENDIX TO NO. 484

Statement of Policy on the transfer of a colonial mandate or mandates to Germany to be made by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons on July 27, 1936 as finally approved by the Foreign Policy Committee on the same day at 1 p.m.

I wish now to deal with a matter regarding which questions have several times been addressed to the Government, namely, their attitude to the transference of territories at present held by them under Mandate.

I should like first to revert for a moment to a subject which of late has, as it were, grown up alongside that question, and that is, whether any arrangements are necessary or desirable for giving foreign countries freer access to such raw materials as are produced in mandated territories and colonies.

That is a matter which has frequently been raised, not only on these benches, but by honourable and right honourable Members opposite and below the gangway, and the Government fully recognise its importance. They are alive to the interest which is displayed in many quarters in these matters, and they are fully prepared and would be glad to discuss the subject at some international conference, under the auspices of the League of Nations. At such a conference they would for their part be entirely ready to discuss such problems as wider guarantees for access to colonial raw materials and obstacles in the path of such access. An approach to this matter might well be made at the forthcoming meeting of the Assembly in September.

Having expressed that view, which I hope will command general acceptance, I return to the question of whether an actual transfer of territory held by them under mandate is contemplated by the Government.

Let me make it clear that this question is one that affects all Mandatory Powers, whether this country, British Dominions or foreign countries. The Government have not had any consultation with them upon it, but, so far as His Majesty's Government are concerned, the question of any transfer of mandated territories would inevitably raise grave difficulties—moral, political, and legal—of which His Majesty's Government must frankly say they have been unable to find any solution.

His Majesty's Government, therefore, hope that, with so many other international questions still unsolved, but with new opportunity of advance towards their settlement having been afforded during the last few days, there will in no quarter be the desire at this time to introduce further cause of serious difference between the nations.⁹

⁹ For this passage in Mr. Eden's speech to the House of Commons on July 27 see 315 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 1131-2.

No. 485

Mr. Eden to Mr. Ingram (Rome)

No. 296 Telegraphic [J 6660/3957/1]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 28, 1936, 11.45 p.m.*

In order to prevent any further incidents between His Majesty's Legation at Addis Ababa and the Italian authorities, I think the time has now come—more especially in view of Mr. Roberts' telegram No. 483¹ which however

¹ In this telegram, drafted on July 24 and forwarded to the Foreign Office via Djibouti on July 28 (received in the Foreign Office at 9.30 a.m. on that day) Mr. Roberts explained that since the withdrawal of the privilege of using the cypher, reported in his unnumbered telegram of July 23 (J 6529/3957/1), he was arranging to send cypher telegrams (presumably

you must not quote—for you to take up the matter with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs on the following lines.

We have done our utmost to avoid causes of friction in Addis Ababa and shall continue to do so and in consequence we feel justified in asking that the Italian Government will reciprocate. Our efforts may, however, be impeded by relatively minor incidents affecting the rights and privileges of His Majesty's Legation at Addis Ababa. We have had on several occasions to complain of measures taken by the Italian authorities in Abyssinia which were calculated to prevent the Chargé d'Affaires from communicating freely with His Majesty's Government. The friction engendered by such local action might well nullify these efforts on our part.

You should express the hope, therefore, that the Italian Government, taking the broader and more far-sighted view than is perhaps possible in the case of the Italian authorities in Abyssinia will henceforth effectively prevent the Italian authorities in Abyssinia from restricting or interfering with communications passing between His Majesty's Government and His Majesty's Legation at Addis Ababa. This would not merely apply to cypher telegrams but *a fortiori* to diplomatic bags, messengers, etc.

Repeated to Washington No. 250, Paris No. 200 and Addis Ababa No. 382.

by diplomatic bag) twice weekly to the British Vice-Consul at Djibouti to be forwarded from there. As soon as they discovered that this was happening the Italian authorities would, he thought, 'no doubt withdraw privilege of communicating by diplomatic bag and may even take measures against me for violation of their last decree'. He submitted that the settlement of this question was a matter of the highest urgency.

No. 486

Mr. Ingram (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received July 30, 6.20 p.m.)

No. 519 Telegraphic [J 6709/3957/1]

ROME, July 30, 1936, 4.35 p.m.

I had hardly begun acting upon instructions conveyed in your telegram 296¹ when Minister for Foreign Affairs told me that he had already explained to the Minister for the Colonies that it was impossible to refuse permission to representatives of foreign Powers to communicate with their governments by cypher or to insist that they should deposit their cypher books at the Post Office and he had understood that Signor Lessona had already telegraphed to Marshal Graziani in this sense.

2. In my presence Count Ciano proceeded to telephone to Signor Lessona and an animated conversation ensued in which the former insisted on above point of view. When their rather heated exchange was over Minister for Foreign Affairs said that Minister of the Colonies would again telegraph to the Viceroy in the sense that the Marshal should allow representatives

¹ No. 485.

of foreign governments to communicate with their own governments in cypher through Italian wireless telegraph or Post Office services without depositing their cypher books.²

² The British Legation at Addis Ababa continued to function under difficult conditions for some months. In Foreign Office despatch No. 1738 of October 17 to Paris Mr. Eden said that in view of the Italian position in Addis Ababa the Legation could not fulfil its diplomatic function and suggested that the British and French Legations should be reduced to the status of consulates general. Despite French misgivings that this might involve the *de jure* recognition of Italian authority in Ethiopia an Anglo-French representation was made in Rome to this effect on December 21, 1936. The British Legation guard at Addis Ababa had already been withdrawn on November 23.

CHAPTER VI

The Montreux Conference and revision of the Lausanne Convention of 1923 January 6–July 19, 1936

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

During 1934 and 1935 the Turkish Government had indicated on a number of occasions its desire for a revision of the Convention relating to the regime of the Straits which had been signed on July 24, 1923, as part of the Treaty of Lausanne (Cmd. 1929 (1923)). The detailed story of the negotiations of 1923 is given in Volume XVIII of the First Series, Chapter IV, and the essential provisions were conveniently summarized in an Admiralty memorandum of July 22, 1936 (E 5074/26/44) by Mr. P. J. Henniker Heaton, who attended the Montreux Conference as private secretary to Lord Stanley. He wrote:

‘The principle underlying the Lausanne Convention of 1923 was freedom of passage and navigation by sea and air in the Dardanelles, Bosphorus and Sea of Marmara, known collectively as the Straits. Turkey was accordingly required to refrain from fortifying or garrisoning the Straits, and her security in this area was guaranteed by France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan. The limitations on shipping passing through the Straits were confined to little more than that commercial shipping should pay dues to the Turkish authorities for any services actually rendered, and that the maximum naval force sent into the Black Sea by any one non-Black Sea Power should not exceed the most powerful Black Sea fleet there at the time, though a minimum force not exceeding three vessels of 10,000 tons each could always be sent in; even in time of war Turkey was not given the right to stop belligerent ships in the Straits, unless they belonged to a Power actually at war with herself. An International Straits Commission was established to oversee the execution of the convention.’

By the beginning of 1936 it seemed clear to the Turkish Government that the value of the four-power guarantee of security had been dangerously eroded by the new turn in Italian policy, which included the fortification of the island of Leros in the Dodecanese. The 1923 convention appeared to offer no scope for the strengthening of Turkish armaments in peacetime and to be of doubtful value for defence against anticipated aggression.¹

¹ Professor H. N. Howard, *Turkey, the Straits and U.S. Policy* (Baltimore, 1974) can be

Although the British Government's attitude towards revision had been discouraging in 1935 there was no desire to antagonize the Turkish Government, and by the end of January 1936 the Foreign Office was coming round to the view that from a general political standpoint it would be wise to support Turkish aspirations. On the other hand, there were good reasons for not taking any initiative in the matter, as explained in a minute by Mr. Sterndale Bennett on January 29 (No. 488). The German irruption into the Rhineland on March 7 strengthened the British readiness to regard with sympathy the Turkish inclination to proceed by consultation. When the Turkish Ambassador on April 11 handed Mr. Eden a note proposing a conference of interested parties to revise the Convention, the British reply on April 16 was one of ready agreement (No. 494). After considerable preliminary discussion the conference opened at Montreux on June 22, 1936, and had its last plenary meeting on July 20.

The documents below give the story of the negotiations from the British angle. Full reports of the plenary sessions and the minutes of the technical committee of the conference are printed in *Actes de la Conférence de Montreux concernant le régime des Détroits 22 juin–20 juillet 1936* (Paris, 1936).

recommended as a useful introduction, based on printed sources, to the history of the Straits question in its international aspects between 1914 and 1946.

No. 487

*Sir L. Oliphant to Sir P. Loraine (Angora)*¹

[PRO 30/73/38]

Private and Confidential

FOREIGN OFFICE, January 6, 1936

My dear Percy,

The Secretary of State's telegram No. 105 of the 31st December² will have given you all the reply you need to your telegram No. 156³ of the 27th December about the Straits. You may, however, care to have a few additional comments which arise out of your telegram.

Our feeling is that the press report linking up the Straits with the Turkish Government's readiness to cooperate with us in the event of an Italian attack is nothing more than an attempt at intelligent deduction by an enterprising press. They know that the Turks are fond of airing their Straits grievance; they imagine that neither the Turks nor anybody else would give a straightforward assurance of support without some *quid pro quo*; and they think they have found the *quid pro quo* ready to hand. Of course they are all off the rails,

¹ From the private papers of Sir Percy Loraine.

² Not printed.

³ This telegram commented on press reports that Turkish co-operation with the British fleet in the event of Italian aggression was dependent on recognition of the Turkish right to remilitarize the Straits, and asked whether M. Aras had raised the subject of the Straits at Geneva. Foreign Office telegram No. 105 (see note 1) stated that the question had not been raised.

but then they often are. Would that all Governments were so sensible as Monsieur Numan (your telegram No. 157 of 31st December⁴) and not deem it worth while contradicting the reports of irresponsible newspapers!

We are naturally only too pleased that the Turks have not in fact attempted to link the two questions. In the first place it is sound tactics on their part not to do so, and in the second your general instructions in the Straits business are to dissuade them from linking it up with unconnected questions. No doubt the Turk always has the Straits at the back of his mind, but he probably feels that if collective security within the Covenant can be made a reality he will stand to gain as much as anybody and that the question of the Straits will then become relatively unimportant—while remaining a grievance which can be trotted out as opportunity offers.

From this we conclude that the Turks are not really so anxious as has sometimes been supposed to make the Straits a live issue in present circumstances. This conclusion receives support from the fact that in recent months they have never taken any steps to make much of it, and if they believe that time is on their side I for one would not suggest that they are wrong.

Paragraph 5 of your telegram No. 157 of 31st December shows how fortunate it is, at all events, that the question is *not* under discussion at the moment; and the less heard about it for the time being the better. 'Parler d'amour c'est faire l'amour', if inaccurate, has some political substance. Added to which in these distressful days of crises we ourselves are at present in such straits that we shall not cavil so long as this particular 'pi-dog' is allowed to doze undisturbed.

Yours aff[ectionate]ly,
LANCELOT OLIPHANT

⁴ Volume XV, No. 419. M. Numan Menemencioglu was Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

No. 488

Minute¹ by Mr. J. Sterndale Bennett² on the Remilitarization of the Straits
[E 542/26/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 29, 1936*

The Secretary of State will hardly wish to raise this question. Indeed it has been decided that His Majesty's Government shall at present take no initiative. It is, however, just possible that M. Aras may refer to it.

It was decided in May, 1935, that if and when the Turks should raise this question again, whether at Geneva or with Sir P. Loraine, our general attitude should be one of discouragement. It was, however, to be indicated

¹ This minute was a brief for an interview between Mr. Eden and M. Aras on January 30, 1936; in fact the question of the Straits was not raised at this meeting.

² A First Secretary in the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office.

to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs that if it was the real desire of the Turkish Government to have the Straits Question reconsidered, it would be in the Turks' own interest not to try to link it, as they had previously done, with questions not strictly relevant, but to raise it as a separate issue through the proper channels, e.g. under Article 19 of the Covenant,³ or by simultaneous approach to the signatories of the Lausanne Settlement.

The Turks did not, in fact, raise the question at that time, nor have they subsequently taken any formal initiative, although the matter has, from time to time, been referred to by them in private conversations with His Majesty's Ambassador and was mentioned publicly by M. Aras in a speech⁴ on the general work of the League, before the Assembly last September. We have, meanwhile, come round to the view that from a general political point of view there is much to be said for adopting a sympathetic attitude, should the Turks raise the question through the proper channels. This view received support from a memorandum prepared in October⁵ by the Chiefs of Staff. When this memorandum was discussed⁶ however it was decided that the situation in the Mediterranean rendered the moment inopportune for taking any initiative to encourage the Turks to raise the Straits Question. If the Turks do, in fact, ascribe to this question the importance which it is sometimes assumed that they do, they could in the present circumstances hardly fail to read into any initiative on our part something more significant than merely the desire on our part to show our friendly feeling and to suspect it of having some connexion with the present situation in the Mediterranean or with events at Geneva. Nor would the Turkish Government be alone in reading some ulterior motive into our action. It will be recalled that the Italian Ambassador at Angora recently insinuated to the Turkish Government that they were in fact trading their co-operation with us against the grant of the Turkish desiderata in regard to the Straits.⁷

In principle there is much to be said for making Article 19 of the Covenant a reality, and if the Turkish Government should decide to have recourse to that Article it is felt that our general attitude should not be unsympathetic. But Italy is one of the guarantors of the Straits and quite apart from other considerations (such as the reaction of the French to proposals for treaty revision) this makes the present moment clearly inopportune to liquidate the question either from the Turkish point of view or our own.

³ This Article provided for the reconsideration of treaties which had become inapplicable, and for the consideration by the League Assembly of potentially dangerous international situations.

⁴ Of September 14, 1935; see *L/N.O.J.*, 1935, *S.S. No. 138*, p. 77.

⁵ Not printed (E 6070/919/44 (1935)).

⁶ It was presented to the Committee of Imperial Defence as C.I.D. Paper 1191-B on October 14, 1935.

⁷ Cf. Volume XV, No. 419.

*Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine (Angora)**No. 118 [E 1654/26/44]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 24, 1936*

Sir,

The Turkish Foreign Minister asked to see me this evening. He said that he was anxious to know His Majesty's Government's view as to the future course to be followed between the Locarno Powers, since he had been somewhat confused by the proceedings of the Council.¹

2. I replied that, though the immediate future was very difficult, I was myself convinced that we could not hope to make much progress until the French elections were out of the way. If this was the position, then it would be necessary to find some formula to tide us over that period. The Minister at once replied that he entirely agreed with my appreciation of the situation.

3. M. Aras then went on to speak of the Italo-Abyssinian war. He said that he was convinced that the Italians were attempting to force some agreement on the French, the terms of which were that Italy would back France to the full in Europe, even to the extent of military assistance if sanctions were called off. I replied that I had no information of the kind to which the Minister referred, and that no French Minister had even hinted at anything of the kind to me. Of course we could in no circumstances be a party to any such deal, and if it were attempted it would cause a revulsion of feeling in this country. The Minister said that he quite understood that, and that the position of Turkey in this matter was the same as our own. His information was that the French Ministers had not dared to approach British Ministers on the subject, and that their 'manque de courage' in this respect was greatly irritating the Italians.

4. The Minister then said there was another point to which he wished to refer. I would recall that earlier in the afternoon he had wished to put before the Council a resolution with reference to the demilitarised Straits, but that at my request and that of one or two other members of the Council, he had refrained from doing so for the time being. None the less he wished to make clear the position of the Turkish Government—they did not consider that the present position was either fair or safe for them. Italy had strongly fortified her islands in the Dodecanese; these were, in truth, the Heligoland of the Eastern Mediterranean. They could only serve for two purposes: to dominate the Suez Canal and to dominate the Dardanelles. It was really not tolerable that Italy should have these highly fortified islands within a few hours' sail of the Dardanelles and Turkey be forbidden the right to fortify in their defence. M. Aras added that I would be aware that the Turkish Government would never take any action except in conjunction with His Majesty's Government and the League. What he wished to make clear now was that, before negotiations in connexion with the Italo-

¹ See Chapter II, *passim*.

Abyssinian war were finally brought to a close, the Turkish Government wished to raise the question of the Dardanelles, and to discuss that in relation to the fortification of the Dodecanese, with a view, I understood, to either both the Dodecanese and the Straits being unfortified or the Turkish Government being given permission to refortify.

5. I replied that I fully understood the position of the Turkish Government in the matter, and it was certainly not one of which I felt I had any right to complain; at the same time the Minister would appreciate that in a matter of this gravity I would wish to consult my colleagues and our military and naval authorities. I would do this as soon as possible, and would communicate again with the Minister in due course.²

I am, &c.,

ANTHONY EDEN

² The question of the remilitarization of the Straits had been raised in a conversation of March 17 between Mr. G. W. Rendel, head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, and Nuri Pasha, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, who was in London for the League Council meeting. Nuri Pasha said he was putting forward the Turkish viewpoint at M. Aras's request. Mr. Rendel replied that His Majesty's Government felt it an inopportune time to raise the issue, but that in any case Turkey must pursue her own initiatives, and he repeated this in a conversation with M. Aras himself on March 23.

No. 490

Sir P. Loraine (Angora) to Mr. Eden (Received April 4, 9.15 p.m.)

No. 79 Telegraphic [E 1825/26/44]

Important

ANGORA, April 4, 1936, 7 p.m.

Your telegram No. 69.¹

Although some rumours to a contrary effect are abroad I have not any grounds for supposing that the Turkish Government have changed their intention of seeking to obtain by consent and argument the right to remilitarize the Straits zones.

2. It is to be foreseen however that the action taken by the Austrian Government in liberating themselves from the military clauses of the treaty of St. Germain² following as it does on other repudiations of irksome treaty obligations that have not hitherto been accompanied by any visibly dire consequences to delinquents, will strengthen any elements in this country that might prefer to secure Turkish desiderata by a *fait accompli* and encourage the belief that if you are good and ask patiently and correctly for what you want, you do not get it: but that if you are wicked and take it you get it with relatively negligible risk.

¹ Of March 31, informing Sir P. Loraine that M. Aras had now raised the question of the Straits more or less officially (cf. No. 489).

² The Austrian National Assembly passed without discussion in April, 1936, a bill reintroducing conscription, and increases in the Austrian army were later announced.

3. If Hungary followed the example of Germany and Austria the foregoing arguments would gain in force: if Bulgaria followed it I should anticipate immediate military re-occupation of the Straits zones by the Turks as a first measure. If the Turks had nine points of the law in their hands, the task of solving other provisions of the Straits convention to which we attach value would clearly become more difficult, our good-will having lost its bargaining value.

4. I respectfully submit that the best method of keeping the Turkish Government on the narrow path of virtue as regards the Straits zones question would be to return a prompt and favourable response to their request for its discussion.

5. Once the Turkish Government are committed to a discussion it will be more difficult for them to undertake unilateral action and the door will be closed to some extent to manoeuvres by other Powers. I do not feel entirely satisfied moreover that Russian counsels here in this connexion will be on the side of angels.³

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Bucharest and Belgrade.

³ Mr. H. L. Bagallay, a First Secretary in the Eastern Department, minuted on April 8: 'The general question of policy in connexion with Turkey's desire to raise the question of the remilitarisation of the Straits is under consideration on E 1654/26/44 i.e. the Secretary of State's recent conversation with M. Aras [No. 489].

E 1654, with various attached previous papers and copies of the present telegram from Angora, was taken to Geneva by the Secretary of State on April 7th.

The minutes written on it up to that date agree that there is no reason why His Majesty's Government should offer any opposition to remilitarisation in itself, in fact the reverse; but they differ as to the relative desirability of Turkey taking the question up simultaneously with all the powers concerned in the Straits Convention or taking it up with the League of Nations under Article XIX.

Until E 1654 returns with the Secretary of State's instructions, no decision can be taken as to whether the reply which M. Aras must be given is to be a "prompt and favourable response". From the purely Eastern Department point of view, there is everything to be said for giving a prompt and favourable response, but the feeling of other powers interested in the Straits have to be considered, particularly France, Italy and some of the Balkan States. . . The only point I can think of on which we might wish to bargain with the Turks is their practice, against which we have been protesting for some years, of levying sanitary dues on shipping in transit.' See No. 494 below.

No. 491

Sir P. Loraine (Angora) to Mr. Eden (Received April 16)

No. 202 [E 2024/26/44]

Very Confidential

ANGORA, April 10, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you, with reference to my telegrams Nos. 85¹ and 86¹ of to-day's date, that the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs returned to Angora on the morning of the 8th April, and received me late

¹ Not printed.

in the evening of the same day, after a lengthy sitting of the Council of Ministers.

2. I may add that it was the first opportunity which had occurred for seeing his Excellency for three months, inasmuch as he had spent in Istanbul the only interval between a series of peregrinations, principally to Geneva, Paris and London.

3. After giving me some account of his activities in London and Paris, and after an exchange of views in regard to the general political situation in Europe, with special relation to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict and the German reoccupation of the Rhineland, his Excellency said he wished to speak to me on a matter of considerable importance and no small urgency, namely, the demilitarised Straits Zones. Having regard to the ideas which he proceeded to develop in this connexion, I found it necessary to interrupt him to enquire whether he was approaching me officially on the subject, or otherwise. He replied most emphatically that he wished our conversation and any observations which we exchanged in this connexion to be regarded as entirely informal and friendly.

4. The case which M. Tevfik Rüşti Aras sought to establish was that conditions had substantially changed—and to the detriment of the security of Turkish territory—since the Straits Convention was signed in 1923:² for example

- (1) The feeling of general insecurity was deepening, as a natural result of the issues raised by the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, by Germany's repudiation of the Treaty of Locarno and her unilateral action in reoccupying the Rhineland, by Austria's practical and unilateral denunciation of the military clauses of Saint-Germain, by the general process of rearmament, by the development of events in the Far East, &c.
- (2) That there was a perceptible danger of European war.
- (3) That the Italians had altered the position in the Mediterranean by fortifying the islands of the Dodecanese.
- (4) That the guarantee afforded to Turkey by article 18 of the Straits Convention was seriously vitiated by the facts that (a) Japan had left the League of Nations, and (b) that Italy refused to regard herself as bound by certain international guarantees that she had accepted, so long as sanctions were enforced against her.
- (5) That the habit of unilateral repudiation of international obligations was spreading.

5. His Excellency argued from these premises that Turkey would have to take action to safeguard her position in the Straits Area and thereby ensure the security of her national territory, and he thought it might be a matter of days and hours before she found it necessary to do so. Turkey, he said, could not afford the risk of being taken aback at a moment when so many unpleasant surprises were being sprung.

² See Introductory Note to this Chapter.

6. I told his Excellency that I had listened to his arguments with much interest, but that they belonged, in my opinion, to the stage of a discussion of the question of the demilitarised zones which had not been reached, and the desirability or necessity of which had not yet been formally raised. He must, I thought, have realised from the interviews which he had had in the Foreign Office with you yourself and other officials of the Department that His Majesty's Government had two present preoccupations in relation to this question; firstly, did the Turkish Government intend to raise this issue formally, in spite of the obviously inopportune circumstances, and the addition which it would create to the many other complicated and dangerous issues now pending? Secondly, if they did intend to raise it, would they raise it in a proper form? viz., either with the League of Nations on the basis of article 19 of the Covenant of the League, or by an approach to all the signatories of the Straits Convention.

7. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that a Cabinet decision had been taken to the effect that this question must be settled before the settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. He himself was averse from using article 19 of the Covenant. Here I taxed him with the disinclination of Turkey's allies to advertise the possibilities latent in article 19 of the Covenant; he did not demur, and he admitted that it was true in the case of some of those allies. As regards the other method, he expressed a decided preference for bilateral understandings with Turkey's other co-signatories. I strongly deprecated this method, pointing out that it opened the door wide not only to the suspicion, but also to the fact of political bargaining.

8. M. Aras seemed to give way on this point; but it then transpired that what he had in his mind was to notify the other signatories and to send troops into the Straits Zones as a precautionary measure.

9. Having made sure that he did mean these two actions to be taken simultaneously, I said very firmly that the occupation of the zones would certainly be regarded by His Majesty's Government and by British public opinion as a breach of the Straits Convention, as connoting a unilateral prejudgment by Turkey of a situation which was the common concern of all signatories of the convention, and as a measure of compulsion on the other signatories to discuss the revision of the convention. I felt certain that such a step would make a most unfortunate impression.

10. The Minister pleaded that the step that he proposed was the only way of forestalling a possible Italian *coup de main* on the Straits; that the interests of friendly signatories would clearly be compromised if Turkish action was taken too late; that if the guarantee provided by article 18 of the Straits Convention was, as he feared, actually inoperative, there remained nothing but the Turkish forces on which to rely; that the convention itself might be interpreted as warranting the reoccupation, without fortification, which was all that he contemplated, when there was a generally threatening situation. He argued furthermore that as the guarantee provided by article 18 of the Straits Convention was a 'conjoint' guarantee, and as its implementation by Japan and Italy was more than doubtful, it was quite

open to the other specially mentioned guarantors to interpret it as meaning that the defection of one or more of their co-signatories released them from their own obligation.

11. I remained entirely unmoved by these arguments. I pointed out that according to the convention the Turkish Government had not the right to maintain anything but police and gendarmerie in the demilitarised zones, that the permission to move troops in transit through the zones obviously meant that they were debarred from maintaining troops in the zones, and I reiterated the opinion I had already expressed that reoccupation was a clear breach of the convention and would be regarded as such in the United Kingdom. I added that I was willing to listen with interest and friendly sympathy to the Turkish Government's own appreciation of the circumstances of to-day as affecting Turkish interests and security; I did not feel called to comment on the view which the Turkish Government took of those circumstances; but if they intended to raise formally, which they had not hitherto done, the question of the revision of the convention in respect of the demilitarised zones, I was concerned with the form of the procedure which the Turkish Government proposed to adopt. On this idea I had already expressed myself without any ambiguity, and I should feel that I was a bad friend to Turkey if I left his Excellency under any illusions about the view which would be taken in the United Kingdom if the Turkish Government adopted the form of procedure which his Excellency had outlined to me.

12. M. Tevfik Rüşdü Aras said he entertained no doubts whatsoever about the friendly feeling which had inspired my observations; he would now have to consider the matter further with his colleagues.

13. At this point the conversation on the subject of the Straits Zones ended. I may add, however, as it has a certain bearing on subsequent developments, that before taking leave of his Excellency I mentioned to him that I had received a letter from The King, for delivery to the President of the Republic, announcing the death of His late Majesty, and the accession of King Edward VIII, and I begged him to enquire whether the President of the Republic would be willing to give me an audience in order to receive the communication of this document. His Excellency willingly undertook to make the necessary enquiries.

14. In the late forenoon of the 9th April M. Tevfik Rüşdü Aras called me himself to the telephone and told me that, after seeing me the previous evening, he had been to see the Prime Minister, and subsequently the President of the Republic, in order to consider the situation in the light of the friendly observations which I had addressed to him the previous evening, and the force of which had greatly impressed him. These discussions had proceeded far into the night, and he was glad to tell me that the Prime Minister had recognised the force of my arguments and had undertaken to support him in recommending to the Cabinet, which was to meet again, the abandonment of a reoccupation of the Straits Zones as a step simultaneous with the formal raising of the question with the signatories of the Straits

Convention. He indicated to me clearly that the opposition to this view would come from the Turkish General Staff, with the power and influence of which in questions of national security I believe you are well acquainted. I gathered, moreover, that the President of the Republic had also been won over to the thesis that I had defended. His Excellency also gave me to understand that the view of the General Staff was backed by the leaders of the People's party. This influence, as you are also aware, is very powerful, especially in view of the fact that the Grand National Assembly, which the People's party controls, is the repository of the sovereignty of the nation, and possesses, by virtue of the Constitution, executive as well as legislative powers. During the same telephonic conversation it was also arranged that I should lunch privately on the following day with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in his house.

15. On the 10th April, after lunching with his Excellency, the Secretary-General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and two of the members of the Minister's Private Secretariat, M. Tevfik Rüşti Aras took me aside in another room with M. Numan Menemençioğlu and gave me a copy to read of the draft of the communication which it was proposed to address to the interested Powers that same afternoon, and also to the League of Nations.³ The tenor of this communication was briefly summarised in my telegram No. 86,¹ and you will meanwhile no doubt have received the full text through the Turkish Ambassador in London. M. Aras said he believed that I should be well content with the substance and the wording of this communication. He frankly admitted that neither he nor his colleagues had appreciated, until he had reported the observations I had made to him on the 8th April, that the measure of reoccupation they had contemplated as a necessary and warrantable guarantee of Turkish security would be regarded as a breach of their contractual obligations. They were now grateful to me for having pointed this out with such emphasis, and they had found the arguments which I had developed of the greatest use in persuading the Cabinet to adopt the course of action and procedure which was embodied in the draft communication. The draft, his Excellency continued, had not been an easy one to make. There was a great deal more that the Turkish Government would have liked to say, and from their own point of view would have felt justified in saying, but they had carefully pruned out of it anything which might have been regarded as unnecessarily controversial, or might perhaps have touched the susceptibilities of other Governments interested in the question. Least of all did they wish to affect adversely British opinion, or do, or say, anything likely to alienate British sympathies. He felt that the draft really met British opinion, as I had expressed it to him, and he greatly hoped that I should take a similar view. He believed, moreover, that it would be a source of satisfaction to me to know that the Turkish Cabinet had now come

³ The Turkish note, communicated to the Secretary General of the League of Nations on April 10 and to the British, Bulgarian, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Roumanian, Soviet, and Yugoslav governments on April 11, is printed in *L/N.O.J.*, January-June 1936, pp. 504-5.

round to the view that it was in their own best interests, as well as in those of international co-operation and correct procedure, to follow the course which I had urged on them.

16. After carefully perusing the draft and asking several questions which had for their purpose to elucidate the exact meaning which the drafters had sought to convey (a process which led to some drafting amendments being made there and then), I informed him that, in my personal opinion, the draft met quite adequately the point of view which I had defended, and I expressed the hope that His Majesty's Government would find themselves able, after due consideration, to share this view.

17. With regard to the concluding paragraph of the draft, I enquired whether the Turkish Government shared the view that I myself held, that the process of revision of the Straits Convention, if it took place, should be as restricted as possible. There was much in the convention that really would not be affected, and should not be affected, by an eventual alteration of the clauses concerned with demilitarisation, and it would seem to me a great mistake to throw the whole of the convention into the melting-pot of a fresh negotiation. (In this connexion please see my despatch No. 176 of the 7th April.)¹ I am glad to be able to inform you that M. Tevfik Rüştü Aras replied that, in principle, he entirely shared my view; it was not the intention or the desire of the Turkish Government to throw the whole convention open to revision, or renewed negotiation; they would like to retain intact those parts of it which were not concerned with the demilitarised zones, although it might be necessary to alter those portions in certain details in order to bring them into harmony with whatever new régime for the now demilitarised zones was brought into force. I myself consider that this assurance is a useful and satisfactory one, and I do not believe that the reservation made by his Excellency was intended as a screen for undisclosed designs.

18. This discussion lasted till 4 p.m., at which moment I took leave of his Excellency, who told me that he had to go to a meeting of the party leaders in order to obtain their concurrence in the action the Government was about to take before he came in attendance on the President of the Republic, who was to receive me at 5 o'clock for the purpose reported in my despatch No. 203 of to-day's date.⁴

19. After I had presented the King's letter to M. Kemal Atatürk, his Excellency invited me to sit down, and a conversation on matters of general political interest ensued. Towards the end of this interview, M. Kemal Atatürk referred for the first time to the Straits question, and said that, although he had already heard from the Minister for Foreign Affairs the views which I had urged on the Turkish Government, he would nevertheless be glad if I would explain them again to him, as he wanted to hear them from my own mouth.

20. I therefore went over the ground again. I said that I had learnt with

⁴ Not printed; it referred to the message from H.M. King Edward VIII reported in paragraph 13 above.

the greatest satisfaction of the decision reached by the Turkish Government not to reoccupy the demilitarised zones, pending the result of their attempt to obtain a revision of the Straits Convention by agreement; and with even greater satisfaction of their conclusion that it was not in their interests to take that measure. Having regard to the generally pacific policy which the Government of the republic had so steadfastly pursued, having regard to the stand which the Turkish Government had taken, especially in quite recent times, for international correctness and legality, and for the scrupulous observance of international obligations, I had felt strongly that it would have been a calamity if Turkey had exposed herself to the suspicion, or even the suggestion, that she was failing in her obligations, and was prejudging unilaterally matters which were recognised by international instruments as being of common concern. Besides the importance of the matter for Turkey herself, there was also the international importance. An example was much needed, after the international defaults of Italy, Germany and Austria, to show that questions of this kind could be solved through the proper channel and by agreement, without resort to repudiations or unilateral acts of force; and I sincerely hoped that the present question might end in an agreed and generally satisfactory settlement which would help more than anything else to check the unfortunate series of contrary precedents that had recently been created.

21. M. Kemal Atatürk said that both he and the Turkish Government had greatly appreciated the frankness and sincerity with which I had urged British views on them. The decision taken by the Government had recognised the justice of those views. That decision, nevertheless, involved Turkey in a certain risk, and the Turkish Government had the duty of pointing out that risk. The uncertainties and anxieties which prevailed in regard to Italian ambitions, policies and actions were very natural. He was himself entirely baffled about the probable nature of Italian reaction to the communication which was being addressed that day to the Italian and other interested Governments from Angora. The only thing he felt certain about was that the form of reaction, if not actually provocative, would be manoeuvre, intrigue and probably chicanery. It seemed really incredible that one should have to regard a guarantor as a possible aggressor, but in this case neither he nor the Turkish Government could entirely discard this possibility from their calculations.

22. It was, moreover, impossible not to take note of Signor Mussolini's avowed intention of recreating the Roman Empire; perhaps even the conquest of Ethiopia, if realised, would not satisfy him, and if it did not, one wondered what would be the next step in his expansionist programme. Maybe the risk was a remote one, but in any case the Turkish Government were accepting it for the sake of international correctness and legality.

23. In conclusion, his Excellency thanked me for the explanations I had given of my point of view and for the friendly counsel I had given to the Turkish Government, which, he assured me, was cordially appreciated and

afforded further evidence of the friendliness and candour which he and the Turkish Government had learnt to expect from me.

I have, &c.,
PERCY LORAINÉ

No. 492

Sir P. Lorainé (Istanbul) to Mr. Eden (Received April 11, 10.45 p.m.)
Unnumbered Telegraphic [E 1924/26/44]

Important Very Confidential

ISTANBUL, April 11, 1936, 7.10 p.m.

Turkish Government are anxious about Italian reaction to the approach made yesterday¹ to co-signatories with a view to revision of the Straits Convention as regards the demilitarised zone. They fear such reaction may be provocative, and that even although Italy is a guarantor, Italian naval action against Straits themselves cannot necessarily be ruled out as impossible. They point out that the Italian Government have made it perfectly plain that so long as sanctions are enforced against her Italy does not necessarily regard herself as bound by her international engagements.

These apprehensions may seem and very likely are far-fetched. Turks feel keenly however that by following my personal advice not to re-occupy zone they have in the interests of international correctness and legality exposed themselves to a risk of this nature.

The President of the Republic whom I saw yesterday evening shared these apprehensions.

I suggest that it would be lamentable if for lack of timely precaution the Turks were caught aback by any Italian naval action. I take it that if Italians did take any action against the Straits our guarantee under article 18 of the Straits Convention remains intact and I therefore suggest that we should exercise extreme naval vigilance in the Mediterranean and consider forthwith what our attitude and action would be in a contingency of the nature outlined.

The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs although he has opened his mind freely to me has not requested me to take any action. He has an idea however that as 'conjoint' action is contemplated by article 18 this could be interpreted as meaning that failure of one or more of the guarantors to implement their undertaking released other guarantors from their obligations.

I do not suppose that His Majesty's Government would hold this view and

¹ See No. 491, note 3.

it may become important if necessity arises to let the Turks know that so long as convention remains in force British guarantee remains intact.²

Repeated to Commander-in-Chief Malta.

² This telegram was repeated to Rome by the Foreign Office as No. 131, together with No. 132 of April 13 asking Sir E. Drummond if there could be any justification for Turkish apprehensions.

No. 493

Sir E. Drummond (Rome) to Mr. Eden (Received April 15, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 240 Telegraphic [E 1989/26/44]

ROME, April 14, 1936, 9 p.m.

Sir P. Loraine's unnumbered telegram of the 11th April.¹

Turkish argument that Italian Government will not regard themselves bound by international engagements as long as sanctions are in force seems to me to be far fetched. It is of course true that Italy has indicated clearly (a) that she will not participate in Locarno staff conversations though she has attended meetings of Locarno Powers and (b) she has refused to sign new naval agreement.² In my view, however, her main objects in (a) are to put pressure on France in the Abyssinian dispute and to avoid difficulties with Germany in the present situation. As to (b) this is a new engagement and she hopes by her refusal to put a certain measure of pressure on us. To draw however the conclusion that Italy will refuse to be bound by previous international engagements seems to me to be highly improbable. Does not her attitude on Lake Tsana³ problem afford proof to the contrary? Further I can hardly believe she would at the present juncture do anything so foolish as to attack Turkey. Indeed her passive line in regard to Locarno would seem to indicate equal passivity in this matter. She may well endeavour to be obstructive in future negotiations and endeavour to utilise Turkish request to open up the whole Mediterranean question. Indeed this seems to me likely. But would not a naval attack on the Straits bring her into immediate conflict with the Balkans and even the Little Entente, since Yugoslavia is a member of both and bring in France and ourselves against her under Article 18 of the Convention, to say nothing of Japan and Russia?

To sum up, while I doubt whether Italy would today hesitate to break an

¹ No. 492.

² See Volume XIII, No. 681.

³ The Italian Government had given formal assurances on several occasions during the past year that they intended to respect His Majesty's Government's rights concerning Lake Tsana; cf. paragraphs 44-6 of the Maffey Report, Volume XIV, pp. 767-9. Foreign Office telegram No. 183 to Cairo of April 7 (J 2817/1632/1) stated that 'These assurances were officially confirmed on April 4th when the Italian Ambassador called at this Department on instructions from his Government to renew and re-emphasise that the Italian Government were more than ever conscious of their obligations towards His Majesty's Government and had no intention whatever of overlooking or repudiating them.'

international engagement if she thought it in her vital interests to do so, I think that in view of considerations set forth above any action by her such as that feared by the Turkish Government is most unlikely.

Repeated to Istanbul.

No. 494

Letter from Mr. Eden to Bay Fethi Okyar¹

[E 1970/26/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 16, 1936

Your Excellency,

On the 11th April the counsellor of the Turkish Embassy communicated to my Department an aide-mémoire, dated the 11th April,² expressing the desire of the Turkish Government to enter into discussions with the interested Powers with a view to the revision, in the light of existing political and military conditions, of the convention relating to the régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on the 24th July, 1923. I understand that a similar aide-mémoire has been communicated not only to the other signatories of that convention, but also to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations for the purpose of communication to all members of the League.

2. I have taken note also of the assurance which his Excellency the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs has been good enough to give to His Majesty's Ambassador in Turkey that the revision which the aide-mémoire is designed to obtain relates only to the military clauses of the convention.

3. The request of the Turkish Government for the reconsideration of these clauses raises issues which require careful examination, and you will appreciate the fact that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will need to consult His Majesty's Governments in the Dominions before expressing detailed views.

4. While compelled, therefore, to reserve their comments for the time being on the substance of the aide-mémoire of the 11th April, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom nevertheless recognise that the request for discussion contained therein is one which the Turkish Government are fully entitled to make, and they regard it as a valuable proof of the fidelity of the Turkish Government to the principle that international treaties cannot be modified by unilateral action. On behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, I therefore have pleasure in assuring your Excellency, without delay, that they are ready to discuss the question which has been raised at such time and in such manner as may be found most convenient to all concerned.

I have, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

¹ Turkish Ambassador in London.

² See No. 491, note 3.

Sir P. Loraine (Angora) to Mr. Eden (Received April 24, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic [E 2256/26/44]

ANGORA, April 23, 1936, 8.20 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs after expressing appreciation of promptness as well as of its friendly character spoke to me yesterday evening about three points in your note of April 16th¹ which he felt wanted some clearing up.

1. The assurance given me of which you take note in paragraph 2. Did this mean that His Majesty's Government would for their part strictly confine discussion to military clauses? I said that perhaps my best answer would be to repeat to him exactly what I had reported to you in this connexion, see my despatch No. 202² paragraph 17, His Excellency confirmed accuracy of this report and said that it would best convey his own idea of what was required if one added to revision of military clauses 'and fresh regulations for passage of ships of war, which would take into account the interests and security-needs of States that had a sea-board in the Black Sea and Mediterranean'.

2. Communication of Turkish note to Secretary General to the League of Nations. He asked me to make it quite plain to you that this communication was made solely for information and as a courteous attention to the League. It conveyed no suggestion that question was one for the League as such to deal with. He was aware that Japanese Government would refuse to participate in any discussion conducted through League organs or even under its auspices. He emphatically did not want to bar Japanese participation and indeed intended to consult you in Geneva on May 11th about how best to facilitate it. I told him in this connexion of approach made to me by Japanese Ambassador and of my reply—see my telegram No. 5 from Istanbul.³

3. Last sentence of paragraph 4 of your note. Party leaders had smelt a reservation here and suggested possible meaning was that if e.g. Italy refused Turkish request for negotiations, His Majesty's Government would consider themselves absolved from undertaking them. I said that I regarded the phrase 'at such time and in such manner' etc. as one of correctness and courtesy to other co-signatories whose decision and convenience it was not the business of His Majesty's Government to prejudge. It could not in my opinion be intended to bear the suggested construction. I thought that if one or more of the co-signatories refused Turkish request His Majesty's Government would probably consider that a new situation had arisen which required fresh consultation.

¹ No. 494.

² No. 491.

³ Of April 18, not printed. The Japanese Ambassador, M. Tokugawa, had enquired whether the Straits question was likely to be treated as a League matter, and Sir P. Loraine had replied that he was sure His Majesty's Government would not wish there to be any obstacle to Japanese participation.

Minister for Foreign Affairs seemed perfectly well satisfied with these explanations.

No. 496

Sir P. Loraine (Angora) to Mr. Eden (Received April 24, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 95 Telegraphic [E 2257/26/44]

Confidential

ANGORA, April 23, 1936, 9.35 p.m.

My telegram unnumbered of April 11th from Istanbul.¹

Language held to me yesterday evening by Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs shows that desirability of precautionary measures to forestall an Italian *coup de main* on the Straits is still exercising the Turkish mind. It is not so much that they regard such Italian action as a probable contingency but that prevention is better than cure and that one might just as well be on the safe side.

2. His Excellency put it to me that if (1) there were appreciable delay in fixing a date for discussion of Turkish request for revision or (2) the discussion when initiated dragged on, it would really be better for all our sakes that Turks should occupy the Straits zones and put them in an elementary state of defence. Was there any point, he urged, in risking being taken by surprise, and was there not a good deal of point in removing temptation from Italy's path? He asked my advice about submitting these considerations to you when he sees you in Geneva in May, and in general how I viewed his idea.

3. I urged him first to put off raising any such question as long as he could; secondly to do nothing that might embarrass you personally; thirdly if Turkish Government nevertheless felt they *must* raise it, to do it in a regular way, e.g. to seek a mandate from guarantor Powers.

4. To the first two points he readily agreed and added that he wanted to act in complete harmony with His Majesty's Government whose interests in the matter he regarded as identical with those of Turkey. The third point he also accepted and said he would be perfectly willing to seek authority from guarantor Powers and preferably *after* negotiations had begun, so long as that date was not unduly postponed. I asked him whether he meant that if Turkish forces were to occupy the zones they would be doing so in substitution for forces of the guarantor Powers and with the authority of the latter. He said that expressed his idea very well and that Turkish Government if so authorised would moreover be willing to give an undertaking that they would conform to whatever régime was determined by projected conference.

See my immediately following telegram.²

¹ No. 492.

² No. 497 below.

Sir P. Loraine (Angora) to Mr. Eden (Received April 24, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 96 Telegraphic [E 2258/26/44]

Most Confidential

ANGORA, April 24, 1936, 12.30 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs did not request me to report these considerations but it was evident to me from his demeanour that the urge to develop them comes from President of the Republic; in which case the matter *ipso facto* becomes important.

2. Although I did not say so to His Excellency my own opinion is that President's idea of filling a vacuum is sound provided that it be carried out in a proper way.

3. Anticipation of Minister for Foreign Affairs (i.e. of President of the Republic) is that if Italians succeed in knocking out Ethiopia in the present round Italian pressure will next develop on the Sudan and Nile Valley, with a sharpening of Anglo-Italian tension, and that then it becomes vitally important for Italy that the Straits should remain open for her getting oil supplies from the Black Sea. This could only be definitely ensured if Italy held the Straits. Hence the unalterable Turkish ideas that their interests coincide with ours. This is moreover the same idea that I have reported previously, viz. that a challenge to British power in the Mediterranean is a threat to Turkey's security.

4. Minister for Foreign Affairs further points out that Italy although anticipating an early and favourable military decision in Ethiopia nevertheless continues to mobilise fresh classes and that Signor Mussolini continues to prepare Italian opinion for fresh efforts. He wonders in what direction these fresh forces and efforts will be directed and finds it difficult to believe that these measures are meaningless. Lastly he argues that even if Turkish apprehensions are illusory it is nevertheless much safer to make an aggression on the Straits impossible.²

¹ No. 496.

² Mr. Eden minuted on this telegram on April 25: 'These telegrams [Nos. 495, 496, and 497] are important. We should return as encouraging answers as possible as soon as possible. Anglo-Turkish friendship becomes increasingly important. Please prepare draft against my return on Monday' (see No. 499 below).

Sir P. Loraine (Angora) to Sir L. Oliphant¹

[PRO 30/73/39]

Confidential

ANGORA, April 25, 1936

I inclose [*sic*] herein copy of a minute, which explains itself. Will you please make it official at your end if you consider that desirable.

¹ From the private papers of Sir P. Loraine.

I would have handed a copy of it to the Naval Attaché² had he been here, but he will not be back in Turkey for another fortnight or so, and I daresay you will send a copy of the minute along to the Admiralty.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 498

Minute by Sir P. Loraine

Most Confidential

ANGORA, April 25, 1936

While discussing with me on April 22nd, as reported in my telegrams Nos. 95³ and 96,⁴ the question of Turkey being authorized to reoccupy the demilitarized Straits Zones as a precautionary measure, pending the conclusion of the contemplated consideration by the interested Powers of Turkey's request for a revision of the Straits Convention, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs gave me some information which is likely to be of interest to our naval, military and air authorities.

I should emphasize that the information was given in the strictest personal confidence.

Monsieur Tevfik Rüştü Aras said that as regards the Straits Zones, the one and only thing the Turks were afraid of was a surprise attack. It would not take very long to organize the preliminary defence of the Straits sufficiently to defeat a surprise attack, but if a hostile force—the allusion of course being to Italy—did succeed in effecting a lodgement owing to the present military vacuum in the Straits it might take a long time and much sacrifice to eject it.

The Turks, he said, had been 'fanatically scrupulous' about observing the stipulations of the Straits Convention as regards the demilitarized Zones. (I may observe that we have no trustworthy evidence at all in this Embassy that this statement is not strictly truthful). The mines which would be used were, he said, stored at the head of the Gulf of Ismid; obviously it would take some little time to move them. The artillery was allocated and included some 38 cm. guns. The gun emplacements would be underground, they would be at a number of different points, and arrangements would be made to shift guns, as required, from one emplacement to another. The emplacements would be so constructed as to render it extremely difficult to spot them from the air.

Furthermore Monsieur Aras gave me a few extremely interesting details about the Turkish mobilization system, which he claimed to be in advance of anything yet done in European countries. Plans were cut and dried for meeting every military emergency with which Turkey was at all likely to be confronted, e.g. attack on the Straits, on the coast opposite the Dodecanese, on Smyrna etc. Whichever emergency threatened, the relevant mobilization plan would be put into operation. Under each plan every unit and every reservist would know exactly what to do and where to go. Each man would move at once to the place where he was needed, so as to avoid the loss of

² Captain H. Pott.

³ No. 496.

⁴ No. 497.

time of assembling and moving reservist units under a mobilization scheme. Every detail, he said, had been thought out and laid down.

These statements, besides their intrinsic interest, illustrate usefully the growth of Turkish trustfulness towards ourselves. I may mention another point, which is similarly significant. While discussing with Monsieur Tevfik Rüştü Aras the possible contingency of Turkey being given as it were a mandate to occupy the demilitarized zones provisionally and as a precautionary measure, I suggested, merely as a personal idea, that it might perhaps be as well, in that event, to have some symbolical representation with any Turkish forces in the Zones of the principal guarantor States. I pointed out that until and unless the Straits Convention was modified, its present provisions must be regarded as holding good. His Excellency did not demur in principle at all to this suggestion. He asked whether I meant, e.g. presence of Military Attachés. I said that was the sort of thing I had in mind. He then said, he thought there would be no objection to that but, he added, though of course we wouldn't mind *your* people seeing everything, we shall certainly not allow an Italian Military Attaché to see where our gun emplacements are.

I have handed a copy of this minute to the Military Attaché.

No. 499

Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine (Angora)

No. 88 Telegraphic [E 2258/26/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 28, 1936, 6 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 94, 95 and 96.¹

I approve your language as reported in paragraph 3 of first-mentioned telegram.

I also approve your language in paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 95, although in any circumstances suggested mandate to Turkish Government to proceed to preliminary occupation must surely be regarded as illusory. In the absence of a clear threat to the Straits it could not be given without agreement of all signatory Powers; and if Turkish appreciation of Italian attitude has any foundation it is most improbable that in circumstances contemplated by Turkish Government there would be unanimity even among Guarantor Powers.

But in any case any form of preliminary or precautionary occupation in advance of any negotiations for revision of Convention would be open to gravest objections and we should be doing no service to Turkey, to Anglo-Turkish friendship or to cause of European peace, if we were to give it slightest encouragement. While occupation by mandate would be impracticable for reasons given above, unilateral action by Turkish Government,

¹ Nos. 495, 496, and 497.

unless a definite and patent threat to the security of the Straits had meanwhile developed, would be open to even graver objection. Unless it were justified by some Italian action which completely altered whole situation in Europe and Mediterranean—a contingency which still appears remote—it could not fail to destroy the widely favourable impression created by the correct manner in which the Turkish Government have hitherto proceeded, and to undo all the good which their *démarche* has undoubtedly done in improving the European atmosphere. The result might be indeed, while alienating sympathy elsewhere and dealing a severe blow to the principle of Treaty revision by negotiation, to give the Italian Government a plausible pretext for taking the very action which the Turkish Government now profess to fear. You should therefore urge the Turkish Government most strongly to refrain from any action of this kind.

Meanwhile I greatly appreciate the desire of the Turkish Government not to embarrass His Majesty's Government and I look forward to discussing the matter further with the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs at Geneva early next month.

No. 500

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received May 12, 9.15 p.m.)

No. 58 L.N. Telegraphic [E 2680/26/44]

GENEVA, May 12, 1936, 6.55 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.¹

My telegram No. 51.²

Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs has now proposed that a conference to consider revision of Straits Convention should be held at Montreux on June 22nd immediately after termination of emergency council meeting fixed for June 15th. Powers represented would be 8 parties to the Convention as well as Soviet Union who signed but did not ratify and Yugoslavia who participated in negotiations but did not sign.

2. M. Aras suggests Montreux as he anticipates Japanese objections to Geneva where negotiations might be regarded as taking place under the aegis of the League and sees various objections to Lausanne.

3. He anticipates general acceptance of this proposal, his only doubt being with regard to Italian Government with whom he is still in communication. He states however that Signor Suvich on May 11th told the Turkish Ambassador in Rome³ that provided Bulgaria agreed Italy would have no objection to abrogation of demilitarisation clauses.

4. He proposes that the Conference should discuss first the abrogation of

¹ Mr. Eden had left for Geneva on May 9; cf. No. 315, note 1.

² Of May 10, not printed; see, however, No. 315.

³ M. Huseyin Ragip Baidur.

these clauses, i.e. Article 4, Article 6, Article 7, Article[s] 9 and 18 of Convention and secondly amendment of Section 2 of annex to Article 2, i.e. regulations regarding passage of warships, etc. through the Straits. Remainder of Convention would remain unaltered except perhaps for new definition of neutrality in Section 1B of annex to Article 2 and possibility (? possibly) for new provision regarding sanitary dues of vessels in transit which however he seems most unwilling to abandon altogether.

5. M. Aras has been asked to put forward definite proposals for amendment of Section 2 of Annex to Article 2 and has promised to arrange to do this through M. Numan when latter visits London next week. He was anxious that these proposals should as far as possible be worked out in the first instance in consultation with His Majesty's Government.

6. What he apparently has in mind is limitation of total force which any one Power may send through the Straits to equivalent of total force of Turkish navy coupled with further limitation of number of ships allowed to pass through the Straits at any one time to total of Turkish forces in the Straits and Sea of Marmora at that time. He also apparently contemplates a period of notice sufficient to enable all Black Sea and Mediterranean Powers to be informed of any impending naval movement through the Straits.

7. He realises that general policy of His Majesty's Government is to secure maximum possible freedom of passage. Policy of Soviet Union on the other hand is maximum of restriction of passage though they are prepared to go some way to meet desiderata of His Majesty's Government. M. Aras professes to wish to find a compromise on the lines suggested above.

8. Straits Convention was signed on behalf of the whole Empire and question of position of Dominions therefore arises. Apart from the necessity of obtaining very early concurrence of the Dominions in the proposal to abrogate demilitarisation clauses and to modify provisions regarding passage of warships, question of acceptance of new amending Convention by the Dominions presents technical difficulties which should be considered at once in consultation with the Dominions Office. It may be that some at any rate of the Dominions would not wish to send Plenipotentiaries and sign proposed Convention. If so procedure adopted in case of termination of capitulations in Persia when the matter was dealt with by exchanges of notes may afford a useful precedent. Meanwhile Dominions Office in seeking Dominions concurrence will no doubt emphasise the desirability of doing everything possible to encourage present attempt at Treaty revision by legal and peaceful methods instead of by unilateral action.

9. Admiralty will also presumably wish to consider at once question of revision of Section 2 of annex to Article 2 in order to be ready for possible discussions with M. Numan next week. Admiralty expert will of course be required eventually to attend the proposed Conference.

Repeated to Angora.

No. 501

Minute by Mr. Rendel on Turco-Italian relations

[E 2737/26/44]

GENEVA, May 13, 1936

Monsieur Aras told me this morning that the Turkish Ambassador in Rome had, on his instructions, had an interview with Signor Mussolini yesterday evening, mainly with regard to the question of the Straits. Signor Mussolini had apparently begun by complaining bitterly of the initiative which he alleged the Turkish Government had taken in keeping the Balkan States on the side of the sanctionist Powers and preventing them from coming to terms with Italy. The Turkish Ambassador had, as usual, replied that Turkey had merely fulfilled her obligations as a loyal member of the League and had been actuated by no anti-Italian motive.

Signor Mussolini had then gone on to complain of the difficulties he found in establishing really satisfactory Italo-Turkish relations. All his advances had hitherto met with rebuffs. He was, however, willing to let bygones be bygones if only Turkey would make some gesture to show that she was not anti-Italian. He did not specify what this gesture should be and did not apparently specifically link it up with the question of Italy's attitude towards the revision of the Straits Convention.

The Turkish Ambassador had then pressed Signor Mussolini to declare forthwith his agreement to the principle of the abrogation of the demilitarisation clauses of the Straits Convention. Signor Mussolini had repeated that Italy would be prepared to take part in any conference to discuss the revision of the Convention, but added that she must reserve her attitude in regard to the substance of the question. Monsieur Aras was hopeful, however, that when the conference took place the Turkish desiderata would not meet with insuperable objections from the Italian side.

No. 502

Mr. Eden to Sir P. Loraine (Angora)

No. 98 Telegraphic [E 3009/26/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 27, 1936, 10 p.m.

Recent discussions with M. Numan, records of which go to you by bag,¹ have centred round question of revision of clauses of Straits Convention dealing with passage of warships. Turks apparently want power to prohibit passage of warships, at their discretion. Admiralty see strong objections in

¹ Not printed. M. Menemençioğlu visited London during the latter part of May. Following meetings with him on May 20 and 22, Foreign Office officials had two further meetings with him and the Turkish Ambassador on May 26. The present telegram summarizes the discussion and the conclusions reached.

principle to agreeing to any Power which controls an international waterway having discretion to allow or prohibit passage of warships through it. They consider that, if complete freedom of passage cannot be secured, matter should be dealt with by international regulations, so that international responsibility of Power concerned would not be engaged, as would be the case if it were free to permit or prohibit passage. It is possible that compromise might be reached on basis of leaving Turks discretion to prohibit passage of warships in certain specified eventualities, such as 'imminent threat of war'.

Definition of these eventualities, however, and provision for situation which might arise in event of any general action under Article 16 of the Covenant against a Covenant-breaking Power, may involve references in amending Convention to League Covenant, and for this and other reasons there is some danger of other Powers making difficulties at Montreux. If this were to happen and lead to deadlock, conclusion of amending Convention providing *inter alia* for formal abrogation of demilitarisation clauses might be seriously delayed, with unfortunate consequences. It was therefore suggested to Turks on May 26th that it might be well to revert to a suggestion originally put forward by M. Aras at Geneva on May 11th and to divide conference into two parts, the first to deal only with the abrogation of the demilitarisation clauses, and the second (to be held in the Autumn) to deal with any other necessary amendments, such as revision of clauses relating to passage of warships.

Turks, while agreeing to put this suggestion to their Government, see serious objections to it. They profess to regard revision of warships clauses as necessary corollary to abrogation of demilitarisation clauses, and are obviously nervous lest, if they secure latter without obtaining former, opportunity may be given for indefinite obstruction and delay. Moreover, they foresee various difficulties over production of two separate amending instruments, especially as they would not be satisfied unless general principle of amendment of warships clauses were provided for in first instrument, and if general agreement can be reached on question of principle, they do not see why it should not be reached on points of detail.

M. Numan has hitherto only put forward detailed proposals for new regulations providing for passage of warships through Straits in peace-time. Main object of these would be strictly to limit total number of foreign warships of all nationalities, in passage between entrance of Dardanelles and exit of Bosphorus at any one time, to half total tonnage of Turkish Fleet. This would be distinct from regulations governing passage of warships in war-time, and also from question of total force of any one Power permitted to pass from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, or vice versa. Further proposals on latter question are expected shortly.

M. Numan leaves here May 28th, and discussions will presumably be continued with Turkish Ambassador.

Discussions are purely exploratory and without commitment on either side.

Mr. Morgan (Angora) to Mr. Eden (Received June 12, 5 p.m.)

No. 135 Telegraphic [E 3471/26/44]

Important

ANGORA, June 12, 1936, 12.25 p.m.

The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has handed to me the following outline of Turkish proposals for Montreux Conference.¹

Section I. General security of Turkey.

(a) Demilitarisation clauses of the Straits Convention to be abolished:

(b) Civil and military aircraft passing between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea not to fly over the Straits Zone, but to use a route to be prescribed and obey the usual Turkish aerial navigation rules:

(c) Establishment of regulations for passage of warships in times of peace or war or threat of war to Turkey:

(d) Commercial Navigation to be entirely free at all times.

Section II. Security of the Straits.

(a) Limit of tonnage of warships to be sent by any one Power through the Straits at any one time to be 14,000 tons, Turkish Naval force having been taken into consideration in fixing this limit, the absence of the Turkish fleet from the Sea of Marmora or temporary withdrawal of a powerful unit of the fleet from activity will necessitate passage of the above maximum tonnage in two instalments. Otherwise maximum may pass through as one whole:

(b) Passage of submarines to be forbidden.

Section III. Security of the Black Sea.

(a) Limit of tonnage of non-littoral Powers to be admitted into the Black Sea at any one time to be 28,000 tons and then only for courtesy visits and for fifteen days:

(b) Similar rules to govern the entry into the Mediterranean of tonnage of Black Sea littoral Powers:

(c) Passage of warships to be subject to one month's notice to Turkey:

(d) Straits Commission to be abolished.

See my immediately following telegram.²

¹ A formal invitation to send delegates to a conference at Montreux was addressed to His Majesty's Government on May 29 by M. Aras, and accepted in a telegram of June 3 to M. Aras.

² Not printed. Mr. Rendel noted that it 'merely states that outline is being communicated to certain other governments. A later telegram still [No. 138 of even date] states that the interested parties have received it'.

Memorandum¹ by Mr. Eden on the Montreux Conference to consider the revision of the Straits Convention of Lausanne

[E 3583/26/44]

Secret

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 15, 1936*

As my colleagues are aware, arrangements have been made for a conference to be held at Montreux on the 22nd June to consider the revision of the Straits Convention of Lausanne. The events which have led up to this conference are briefly as follows. On the 11th April the Turkish Ambassador handed in a note² expressing the desire of the Turkish Government to secure the revision of this Convention, and suggesting that a conference of the interested parties should be held to consider it. The main desideratum of the Turkish Government was to obtain the right to rearm the Straits, on the ground that the guarantee of protection contained in Article 18 of the Straits Convention, which had been given to the Turks in consideration of their agreement to the demilitarisation of the Straits, was no longer of any value in present conditions. We had already been fully informed of the anxiety of the Turks to secure the right of remilitarisation of the Straits, and the matter had been considered by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, who had agreed that the balance of advantage from the point of view of British interests would be in allowing the Turks the right they desire. I accordingly replied to the Turkish Ambassador on the 16th April³ informing him that for their part His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would gladly agree to a conference of the interested Powers to be held at a place and date convenient to all concerned. I added that I understood that the only parts of the Convention which the Turks desired to modify were the so-called demilitarisation clauses.

2. The whole question was informally discussed with the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs at Geneva during the last Council meeting of the League, and with the Secretary-General of the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs during the latter's visit to England at the end of May, and, as a result, M. Aras, on the 29th May,⁴ addressed a formal invitation to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to send representatives to a conference to be held at Montreux on the 22nd June, a date and place which he had assured himself would suit all concerned. In view of the discussions which had already taken place, I informed M. Aras that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would be glad to agree to this, and to send a delegation to the conference.

3. I may explain that the matter has already been very fully discussed with the Dominions Office, and that the Dominions have been kept fully

¹ This memorandum was circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 168(36) and considered at a Cabinet meeting on June 17, when it was decided to approve Mr. Eden's recommendations.

² See No. 491, note 3.

³ See No. 494.

⁴ See No. 503, note 1.

informed. The position in regard to them is that, as the original Convention was signed on behalf of the British Empire, and ratified by the King on behalf of the whole Empire, together with the rest of the Peace Settlement with Turkey, the Dominions and India are in fact parties to the Convention. Indeed, if they were not, they would still be at war with Turkey. Turkey can only be legally released from any of her obligations under the Convention with the consent of all the parties to that instrument, and the concurrence of the Dominions will therefore be required in any amending Convention which may result from the impending conference. The Commonwealth of Australia has decided to be separately represented at the conference, but it seems probable that arrangements will have to be made for the majority of the other Dominions to indicate their acceptance of the conclusions of the conference in some other manner. Discussions on this question are actively proceeding, and a satisfactory arrangement has already been come to on this point with the Irish Free State. Meanwhile the Turkish Government have sent a separate telegram asking His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to invite, on their behalf, all the Dominion Governments to be represented. This invitation has been transmitted to its destinations.

4. It has been arranged that Lord Stanhope shall lead the United Kingdom delegation, and arrangements have been made for the whole delegation, including the necessary experts, to leave London on Saturday, the 20th June.⁵ The proposal is that the conference should hold plenary meetings for four days, i.e., until the opening meeting of the Council of the League at Geneva on the 26th June, when several of the delegates to the Montreux conference would have to go to Geneva. It would then split up into technical committees, and there seems some hope that, unless agreement is unduly delayed, some amending instrument may be ready for signature immediately after the meeting of the Assembly of the League, i.e., early in July.

5. In view of the report of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee referred to in paragraph 1 above, I propose that Lord Stanhope should be authorised

⁵ Mr. Morgan had telegraphed on June 5 to say that M. Aras was worrying about the choice of presiding officials at the conference. He did not wish the presidency to be filled for even one session by Italian or Japanese delegates; he was inclined to suggest M. Motta (Switzerland) as honorary president, with M. Blum, if he could be induced to attend, as president. He hoped that Mr. Eden and M. Litvinov would be vice-presidents. Pressure of other work made it impossible for Mr. Eden to accept, but on June 9 he suggested Mr. S. M. Bruce (Australia) as a suitable alternative, at the same time questioning whether M. Litvinov, whose country was not technically a party to the convention, was an appropriate choice. The conference had been called for June 22 when it was thought that the League Council would meet on June 16; the moving of the date of the Council to June 26 (see No. 383, note 1) was one reason for Mr. Eden's inability to attend, but there were others. When M. Aras on June 10 sent a message through Mr. Morgan to Mr. Eden urging 'with friendly insistence that he should be there', Sir R. Vansittart wrote: 'Unless the Egyptian question [cf. No. 354] is settled in principle at least tomorrow, I wd urge "with equally friendly insistence" that the S. of S. shd *not* go to Montreux. There is no comparison from our point of view between the importance of the two questions. The Turks will certainly get what they want in one respect, and will have to accept a delay in the other. But we may perish if we have to lock up two or three divisions in Egypt. R. V. June 11.' M. Blum declined; M. Aras then agreed that Mr. Bruce should preside.

to agree at once to the abrogation of those Articles of the existing Straits Convention which provide for the demilitarisation of the Straits Zone. I may explain that if the Turks had decided to follow the example of Germany and repudiate the Straits Convention unilaterally, we should, in fact, not have been able to prevent them from doing so. The fact that they have acted in so proper and correct a manner in trying to secure the revision of this treaty instrument by negotiation and agreement, gives them a very strong claim to favourable treatment. It is, in fact, most important on general grounds that it should be made clear that treaty revision by agreement can pay as well as, or better than, unilateral repudiation. Moreover, we have the strongest interest, from the political point of view, in developing and strengthening the friendly relations at present existing between Turkey and ourselves, and in responding to her recent advances in this direction. I therefore consider that from every point of view it is most important that this concession—which we could not in any case resist—should be made as generously and completely as possible from the outset.

6. The Turks have also indicated that they intend to press for the revision of the clauses of the Convention dealing with the passage of warships through the Straits. This question has formed the subject of considerable unofficial discussion with representatives of the Turkish Government and between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, and there seems no reason to anticipate any insuperable difficulty in reaching agreement as to what can reasonably be conceded to the Turks in this direction. In these circumstances I suggest, for the consideration of my colleagues, that Lord Stanhope should be authorised to accept any solution on which the Foreign Office and Admiralty agree.

7. I should add that the other Departments of His Majesty's Government have been kept fully informed throughout these discussions, and that I have no reason to believe that any of them dissent from the course of action proposed.

No. 505

Mr. F. Cuénod¹ (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received June 22, 4.45 p.m.)

No. 3 Telegraphic [E 3712/26/44]

Immediate

MONTREUX, June 22, 1936, 3.25 p.m.

Following from Lord Stanhope.²

Following for Secretary of State

We have now received advanced [*sic*] copy of the draft of the new conven-

¹ H.M. Vice-Consul at Montreux since 1902.

² First Commissioner of Works since June 17, 1936; before that Under Secretary of State to the Foreign Office; head of the British delegation which went to Montreux on June 20: cf. No. 504, note 5.

tion which the Turkish delegation will circulate this afternoon.³ Proposals contained in it differ in certain important respects from those hitherto received,⁴ chiefly in regard to regulations for passage of warships of the Black Sea Powers. These new proposals are evidently consequent upon difficulties made by Russians (see my telegram No. 2)⁵ and represent efforts to meet Russia's point of view.

Proposals regarding the passage of warships contemplate:

- (a) Time of peace (Article 6)
- (b) Time of war—Turkey neutral. (Article 7)
- (c) Time of war—Turkey a belligerent. (Article 8)
- (d) Time of peace but threat of war. (Article 9).

(a) Passage of warships in peace time will be subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Notification—one month (but not authorisation).
- (2) Passage by day and for courtesy visits only.
- (3) Submarines entirely prohibited.
- (4) Maximum naval force in the Straits belonging to any one Power not to exceed a force of one cruiser and two destroyers (or any other combination of vessels) up to a maximum tonnage of 14,000 tons. Total tonnage of all foreign Powers present in the Straits at one time not to exceed 14,000 tons.
- (5) This limit can be further reduced if the Turkish fleet in the Sea of Marmora is temporarily reduced. In this case if the tonnage of one ship of a foreign force in the Straits exceeds half the total tonnage of that force, that ship shall make the passage alone.
- (6) Total tonnage of non-littoral Powers to accumulate in the Black Sea not to exceed 28,000 tons.
- (7) Limit of stay in the Black Sea for ships of non-littoral Powers fifteen days.
- (8) Regarding passage of ships of Black Sea Powers to the Mediterranean,

³ The first session of the conference began on June 22 at 4 p.m. M. Motta acted as honorary president at this session, and on the proposal of M. Titulescu Mr. S. M. Bruce was elected president, M. Nicholas Politis (Greek Ambassador in Paris) vice-president, and M. Aghnides (Greece) secretary general of the conference. As item 10 of the second session on June 23 at 10.30 a.m. M. Menemencioglu introduced the Turkish draft convention, which the conference had agreed to take as the basis of its discussions. The full text of this draft convention is printed in *Actes de la Conférence de Montreux concernant le régime des Détroits* (A. Pedone, Paris, 1936, cited subsequently as *A.C.M.*), Annex I, pp. 285–7. At the second meeting the conference decided to work through the articles of the draft convention and to set up a technical committee and a drafting committee to which points could be referred for closer study. Proceeding on these lines the conference held three more sessions on June 23, 24, and 25, after which, having completed what the president called 'the first reading of the convention', the conference held no further meeting until July 6, thus allowing the technical committee time for detailed study and negotiation (see No. 518 below).

⁴ See No. 503.

⁵ In this telegram of June 22 Lord Stanhope reported that the Russians were pressing for the right to send unlimited naval forces into the Mediterranean.

regulations for passage through the Straits apply but no limit is laid down for total tonnage which may accumulate in the Mediterranean or return to the Black Sea.

- (9) Special provision is made enabling Turkey to authorise passage in either direction of one unaccompanied unit of up to 25,000 tons of 'existing' fleet of a Black Sea Power.

(b) In this case peace regulations to apply to belligerents as well as to neutrals subject to no hostile act or visit and search taking place in the Straits and subject to Turkey's obligations under League Covenant.

(c) In this case passage to be subject to Turkish authorisation.

(d) If Turkey considers herself under a threat of war she will have the right to institute the procedure in (c) informing simultaneously the League of Nations and Signatory Powers.

Remainder of Turkish draft calls for no telegraphic comment.

- (10) Convention to be for fifteen years. Signatory Powers to have the right to propose modification at the end of five year periods.

Please obtain and telegraph Admiralty comments at the earliest possible moment.

Full text by bag.⁶

⁶ Montreux despatch No. 1 of June 22 (E 3749/26/44), not printed.

No. 506

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received June 22, 10 p.m.)

No. 4 Telegraphic [E 3748/26/44]

Immediate

MONTREUX, June 22, 1936, 7.24 p.m.

Japanese delegate told me¹ this morning that Japan had no special interest in the question of the revision of the Straits Convention and was inclined to agree, subject to logical reservation regarding possible appeal to the Council of the League of Nations, to whatever line might be taken by His Majesty's Government and other Great Powers.

2. I asked him for his views on reciprocal limitation on tonnage of any fleet entering the Mediterranean from the Black Sea not exceeding the total permitted in the opposite direction. This question is assuming increasing importance and may prove the major factor in the impending negotiations.

3. Monsieur Sato appeared to have imperfect appreciation of the implications of this issue. It was pointed out to him that if Russia remained free to send (albeit in limited groups during passage through the Straits) unlimited forces into the Mediterranean, not only might the balance of naval forces in the Mediterranean be adversely affected, but she might easily decide greatly to increase her building programme in the Black Sea where

¹ i.e. Lord Stanhope.

her shipyards would not only be nearer to her sources of supply for necessary raw materials but would also be far safer from attack especially by air in the event of a crisis. Moreover the limit which it is proposed to impose on the total tonnage which non-Black Sea Powers may send into the Black Sea would give her ample protection. (This limit in fact would become more and more illusory as the Russian Black Sea fleet increased). It might therefore be that if it were agreed that the new Convention should place no limit on the total tonnage passing from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean, strong inducement might be offered to Russia not only to embark on heavy new programme of construction in the Black Sea shipyards, but to transfer her main shipbuilding activities thither. If however the proposed limit applied equally to passage both into the Black Sea and out of it, Russia would have no inducement to increase her building programme in the Black Sea, and this might have far-reaching advantages.

4. Japanese delegate appeared to be much impressed by these arguments which were apparently new to him. He said that he would immediately place them before his government and seek instructions.

5. When I similarly asked the Yugoslav delegate subsequently for the views of the Yugoslav Government on the question of the imposition of total limit for tonnage passing from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean he explained that his government were in a very delicate position vis-à-vis Soviet Union which they had never recognised so that they would not wish to take any prominent part in opposing any reasonable Russian proposal. He was inclined to take the line that Russia would not in fact construct a large fleet in the Black Sea whatever she might be allowed under the new convention.

6. In later conversation with Monsieur Boncour and Monsieur Ponsot² I derived the impression that French were most unlikely to oppose the Russians on any point and that it would be useless to rely on their cooperation in the present question.³

7. Monsieur Aras now tells me that Turks are meeting with further difficulties from Russians who are claiming absolute right to send 25,000 ton unit through the Straits in either direction on any occasion irrespective of Turkish authorisation.

8. I have the impression that present question is assuming increasingly Anglo-Russian character and that we should do well to make utmost possible concessions to Turks in all points of detail if we are to secure their cooperation in preventing Russia having matters very much her own way.

9. Please communicate this telegram most urgently to the Admiralty as it may affect their views on questions raised in my telegram No. 3.⁴

² French Ambassador at Angora and French delegate to the Montreux Conference.

³ Cf. *D.D.F.*, Series 2, vol. ii, No. 326.

⁴ No. 505. Foreign Office telegram No. 1 to Montreux of June 23 ran: 'Admiralty are doubtful of practicability of pressing for limitation of total tonnage to be passed from Black Sea to Mediterranean. Whole question is being discussed with them and instructions will be sent as soon as possible.'

No. 507

*Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received June 23, 4.20 p.m.)
No. 8 Telegraphic [E 3759/26/44]*

MONTREUX, June 23, 1936, 3.25 p.m.

Following from Lord Stanhope.

At the second session of the Conference¹ this morning all the delegates accepted the Turkish draft² as a basis for discussion.

Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics while accepting the principle of restriction of passage of warships of non-Black Sea Powers as proposed by the Turks, emphasized the special position of the riparian Powers and claimed the freedom of passage in both directions for all naval forces of Soviet Union including those from the Baltic.

He also, with the support of French delegate, expressed a wish for special proposals to cover the passage of warships arising out of the action taken as a result of obligations contracted under the Covenant of the League of Nations and regional pacts within its framework.

¹ A.C.M., pp. 29-35.

² Cf. No. 505.

No. 508

*Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received June 24, 8.30 a.m.)
No. 10 Telegraphic [E 3798/26/44]*

Important

MONTREUX, June 24, 1936, 1.55 a.m.

Following from Lord Stanhope.

My telegram No. 8.¹

Monsieur Litvinov asked to see me this evening.² He explained that he understood a report was gaining ground that questions under discussion were assuming increasingly the character of an Anglo-Russian difference. He did not know why this should be so and was most anxious to prevent any such situation from developing. He asked therefore for any information I could give him as to possible occasion of this rumour.

2. I explained that it was no doubt due to the fact that Turkish draft introduced an entirely new differentiation of treatment between Black Sea and non-Black Sea Powers and that as a result, while non-Black Sea forces entering the Black Sea would be strictly limited, U.S.S.R. would be enabled to send unlimited forces into Mediterranean. His Majesty's Government might find it difficult to reconcile a differentiation of this kind with principle which they had hitherto maintained of freedom of passage and equality of treatment.

3. Monsieur Litvinov then produced all the usual arguments about the

¹ No. 507.

² i.e. June 23.

Black Sea being a *mare clausum* and enquired why any non-Black Sea Power should wish to send any forces into it. If forces were required for rendering assistance against an aggressor State this could be done by proviso regarding mutual assistance within the framework of the League, while, apart from this, naval forces could only be sent in for aggressive purposes.

4. It was explained to him that present Turkish proposals contained a very important difference of principle from those which had been adopted at Lausanne in 1923.³ The principle had then been agreed upon, largely at the instance of His Majesty's Government, that the Black Sea should be regarded as an international sea and the Straits as an open international water-way. On the Black Sea States representing that this might threaten their security adequate protection had been furnished to them by limitation of non-Black Sea fleets entering the Black Sea to size of strongest Black Sea fleet. Two principles had thus been adopted at Lausanne, freedom of entry and protection for Black Sea States. It was now proposed to abandon one of these principles to which His Majesty's Government were known to attach the greatest importance. Monsieur Litvinov explained that the U.S.S.R. had never accepted the first of these two principles and it was for this reason that his government had refused to ratify Lausanne Convention.

5. It was suggested to him that if U.S.S.R. insisted on unlimited freedom to send forces into the Mediterranean and would at the same time agree to non-Black Sea Powers having similar freedom in regard to Black Sea, His Majesty's Government might raise no objection. Or again, it might well be possible to reach an agreement based on limitation on entry into the Black Sea if the U.S.S.R. would equally accept principle of limitation on entry into the Mediterranean. In that case the precise yardstick to be used for arranging either of these limits could form the subject of subsequent discussion. Essential point was equality of principle.

6. It was pointed out to him that if present differentiation were to be adopted Turkey might be accused by a non-signatory Power of an un-neutral action if in time of war she allowed a Russian fleet to pass through the Straits but refused that of a non-. . .⁴ Monsieur Litvinov's answer was that in such an event the war would presumably be a League war involving other Powers so that the case would not arise in such a form.

7. Discussion covered a wide field and analogies of the Baltic and the Persian Gulf were freely quoted but Monsieur Litvinov was quite unshaken in his main thesis. He made no secret of his nervousness of the consequences should Japan, Germany or Italy acquire the right each to send a fleet into the Black Sea equal to the total Russian fleet although it was pointed out to him that this might be met by a global limitation.

8. Monsieur Litvinov finally asked whether we should like to see the Straits completely closed. I asked him whether Russia would. He said they had not really thought about it. I replied that position was the same with His Majesty's Government.

³ See Series I, Volume XVIII, Chapter IV.

⁴ The text was here uncertain.

9. I suggest that in these circumstances it may be preferable to accept increased limitations on entry into the Black Sea if thereby we can secure some limitation on entry into the Mediterranean rather than to continue to work for increased freedom of entry into the Black Sea at the cost of absence of all limitation on entry into the Mediterranean.⁵

⁵ Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 348.

No. 509

Foreign Office to Mr. Cuénod (Montreux)

No. 2 Telegraphic [E 3839/26/44]

Important

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 25, 1936, 10.15 p.m.*

Following for Lord Stanhope from Sir R. Vansittart.

Your telegrams ending with No. 10¹ have been discussed with Admiralty.²

There is no restriction in existing Convention on total tonnage which may be passed from Black Sea to Mediterranean and it seems certain that Russia will not accept any such restriction in new Convention. Will not attempt to force this upon her only lead therefore to Anglo-Russian dispute? Furthermore, there is no evidence that Turkey has any interest in limiting total tonnage passing into Mediterranean. May not insistence by us on this point therefore by producing deadlock alienate Turkey also?

From the general point of view of keeping Russian ship-building at a minimum it is doubtful whether there is any advantage in restricting egress from the Black Sea, since the greater Russia's freedom in moving warships from one potential theatre of war to another the less her total ship-building is likely to be. Moreover, in war we could not rely on any paper prohibition of her use of the Straits.

Conclusion we have reached is therefore that there is no advantage in resisting Russian claim for freedom of egress, and that main requirement of His Majesty's Government is to secure not equality with Russia but maximum degree of freedom for the British fleet to pass into Black Sea particularly in time of war. We consider that the United Kingdom Delegation should be prepared eventually to accept freedom for Russia to pass into Mediterranean and should only oppose it so far as seems desirable in order to establish a good bargaining position for securing what we ourselves want. It appears that argument to use is that the restriction of freedom should not be too one-sided and that as Russia is free to send unlimited forces into the Mediterranean we should not be unduly restricted in sending forces into the Black Sea.

Main point in case both of ingress into Black Sea of non-riparian forces and of egress of riparian forces is what is to happen in time of war. It is clear that, whatever the Convention provides, if Turkey is herself belligerent régime applied in practice will be entirely at her discretion. Similarly, if

¹ Nos. 505-8.

² See No. 506, note 4.

Turkey is neutral, no belligerent power, Black Sea or otherwise, will in practice be likely to send ships through the Straits when refortified unless assured that Turkey will refrain from closing Straits against their return. Object of His Majesty's Government should therefore be to obtain a Convention which when Turkey is neutral would either permit a belligerent fleet in unlimited numbers to pass without Turkish authorisation, or which would give her international authority for permitting such a fleet to pass without committing a breach either of neutrality or of the Convention. Admiralty requirements in this respect are set forth in paragraphs 7-10 in Admiralty letter to Foreign Office of 16th June³ of which the Delegation possess a copy.

It is also desirable to endeavour to increase total fleet which could be sent into Black Sea in time of peace and to modify proposal that restriction on tonnage entering Black Sea should be applicable to global tonnage of all non-riparian powers.

It seems to us that the international character of the future Straits régime should be emphasised as far as possible in any new Convention. We note that whereas in the existing Convention the High Contracting Parties collectively recognise the dedication of the Straits to free international usage, the Turkish draft Convention is drawn up on the basis that Turkey as the sovereign Power controlling the Straits grants limited rights of passage for a limited time (15 years) after which intention is presumably that the Straits shall revert to unrestricted Turkish control both as regards commerce and the passage of vessels of war.

From this point of view it would be greatly preferable if the existing Convention rather than the Turkish draft could be adopted as the basis of discussion, thus laying upon the Turkish Delegation the onus of proving their case for any alterations they desire to make. We do not know whether it may yet be possible to secure this but at all events we feel that the aim of the Delegation should be to obtain a Convention differing as little as possible from the existing Convention and embodying in particular Article 1 which emphasises the principle of the freedom of transit and navigation.

In accordance with your request, however, Turkish draft has been carefully considered with the Admiralty. Their main requirements are in time of peace to secure sufficient freedom to show the flag in the Black Sea and to cope with civil emergencies at Black Sea ports and in time of war the maximum possible degree of freedom. In the light of these basic considerations their attitude on matters of detail is as indicated in a separate telegram which will follow shortly.⁴

Repeated to Geneva No. 39.

³ Not printed.

⁴ No. 3 of June 26, not printed.

No. 510

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received June 27)

No. 7 [E 3901/26/44]

MONTREUX, June 25, 1936

The Secretary of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Montreux Conference presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to enclose the following document.

Enclosure

Subject

Communication from M. Litvinov
Dated: 25th June, 1936

Attitude of Soviet Delegation at the
Montreux Conference

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 510

Statement by M. Litvinov

June 25, 1936

In view of the misrepresentation by some newspapers of the attitude of the Soviet Delegation at the Montreux Conference M. Litvinov wishes to make clear that his position can be resumed in the following terms.

The Soviet Government is seeking no other object than to extend the principle of the limitation of the tonnage of non-riparian States in the Black Sea, which was adopted in the Lausanne Convention, to such a point that there should remain no menace to the Black Sea States, or any necessity for the excessive increase of their naval forces in the Black Sea. At the same time the Soviet Delegation cannot but object to the attempts to limit the transit through the Straits of warships of the Black Sea States—a restriction which does not exist at the present time under the Lausanne Convention. The Soviet Union requires freedom of transit for the purpose of visits of courtesy and of communication between its naval bases in various seas, and for no other purpose. At the same time the Soviet Delegation puts forward the principle of freedom of transit for warships through the Straits for all Powers in cases where this is necessary in order to afford assistance to victims of aggression, in fulfilment of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Thus, the proposals of the Soviet Delegation do not aim at upsetting the principles laid down in the Lausanne Convention, but tend rather to their development in harmony with those very changes in the international situation, which prompted the revision of the Lausanne Convention. The demand of the Black Sea States for greater security of their shores does not injure the interests of other States which are given freedom of passage into the Black Sea within reasonable limits for all peaceful purposes.

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received June 26, 6.10 p.m.)

No. 15 Telegraphic [E 3894/26/44]

MONTREUX, June 26, 1936, 4.20 p.m.

Following from Lord Stanhope.

Monsieur Numan [Menemençioğlu] raised privately with Mr. Rendel this morning the question of the Russian attitude.¹ He began by saying that Russia's claim was altogether exaggerated and added that even if all the other Powers concerned agreed to Russia's demands the Turkish Government could not do so. The attitude that the Russians were assuming was at complete variance with the understanding that the Turkish Government had previously reached with them in discussions at Angora. What the Russians now wanted was severe limitation of entry into the Black Sea for all non-Black Sea Powers and complete freedom for themselves to send unlimited forces including units of up to 25,000 tons in and out of the Black Sea so that they would in fact be able greatly to strengthen their Black Sea fleet both by transfers from the Baltic and by increased building programme in Black Sea yards.

This would not suit the Turks at all. Their object was to secure general limitation of naval forces in the Black Sea and not to convert it into a Russian lake with themselves merely acting as door-keepers for Russia.

The Turks were therefore anxious to devise some means of preventing Russians from unduly augmenting their Black Sea forces by either of the above methods. While they would have liked to do this by restricting egress from and entry into the Black Sea for Black Sea Powers they knew that this would be difficult. Their object was to try to limit the Black Sea forces as far as possible to their present strengths and they now felt the best hope of doing this was to devise a sliding yardstick by which total limit for non-Black Sea forces entering the Black Sea might be increased proportionately to any increase on the present strength of any Black Sea fleet.

Mr. Rendel replied that Monsieur Aras' latest informal proposal on this subject had not yet been submitted to His Majesty's Government as the United Kingdom delegation had been awaiting their instructions. The proposal would now be taken up and also laid before the Secretary of State at Geneva and if the necessary authority was obtained it could be informally discussed and worked out next week.²

¹ See No. 510.

² The League Council met in private session on June 26 under Mr. Eden's presidency: cf. No. 383, note 2. The adjournment of the Montreux Conference on June 25 enabled M. Litvinov, Mr. Bruce, and other delegates to attend the Council meetings. Telegram No. 72 L.N. of June 27 to the Foreign Office records a conversation between Mr. Eden and M. Litvinov on the morning of June 27 at Geneva, in which Mr. Eden suggested that the Soviet Government was asking too much: '... it did not seem to me a reasonable proposition... that the Soviet Government should wish to maintain its right to send a fleet into the Mediterranean while virtually closing the Black Sea to all non-Black Sea Powers'. After

M. Numan also raised in connexion with this proposal various questions connected with the composition of proposed global tonnage limit. These will be dealt with separately later.

Further M. Numan was most uneasy at the French attitude regarding arrangements for mutual assistance. He said that the Turkish Government would not object to arrangements providing for mutual assistance in the execution of definite decision of the Council under relevant provision of the Covenant of the League but the French asked for very much more than this. The French apparently were claiming this right for the purpose of being able to assist Russia in advance of any League decision while the Russians were saying that they did not require French assistance but wished to be able to assist France in similar conditions.

Repeated to Geneva (Saving).

M. Litvinov had defended the Soviet plan Mr. Eden commended the idea of a sliding scale 'which would allow of the size of the fleets entering the Black Sea to be raised proportionately as [the U.S.S.R.] increased its fleet'. He had the impression that M. Litvinov would recommend this plan to his Government.

No. 512

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 29, 10.45 a.m.)

No. 78 L.N. Telegraphic [E 3961/26/44]

GENEVA, June 29, 1936, 6.10 a.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

My telegrams Nos. 71 and 72.¹

Mr. Rendel and Admiral Bellairs discussed question of sliding yardstick with Soviet delegation this morning. Soviet delegate began by asking if there was any hope of His Majesty's Government agreeing to complete closure of the Straits in all circumstances to non-Black Sea Powers with complete freedom of passage for Black Sea Powers. He was told this was quite out of the question and he did not pursue the suggestion further.

2. He then put forward a new suggestion for differential treatment between the Powers with and the Powers without bases or important interests in the Mediterranean, his object obviously being to exclude Japan. Overwhelming objection to any such differentiation both from point of view of reaching any agreement at Montreux and from that of the Powers who would not be parties to draft convention should be . . .² to him and he eventually agreed to drop the proposal.

3. Proposal for sliding scale was then explained to him in detail, on assumption however that Turkish demand for limitation by global and not by individual tonnage would have to be conceded. (Separate telegram on this point follows).³ Proposal would be that global tonnage of non-Black

¹ Of June 27, not printed.

² The text was here uncertain.

³ No. 513 below.

Sea Powers to be admitted into the Black Sea at any one time should not at present exceed thirty thousand tons but that if strongest Black Sea fleet should at any time be increased by more than ten per cent of the strength of present strongest Black Sea fleet, i.e. that of Soviet Union, global tonnage limit should be correspondingly increased.

4. Soviet delegate appeared to appreciate the necessity for some arrangement of this kind and in saying he would submit it to his government gave the impression that proposal would not meet with insuperable difficulties from them. His reception of proposal was cordial and friendly.

5. Mr. Rendel took the opportunity to mention that there might be occasions when His Majesty's Government would wish to be able to send additional units into the Black Sea for exceptional circumstances such as rendering of assistance in connexion with some catastrophe, e.g. earthquake or fire (he instanced Salonica earthquake) and also in the event of civil disturbance seriously threatening British life and property. Soviet delegate anticipated no insuperable difficulty in regard to the first eventuality but saw gravest objection in the way of the second in view of what he described as public demand in Russia against any possibility of foreign interference in any country's internal affairs. He held out no hope that Soviet Government would be prepared to agree to this proposal. Mr. Rendel explained that public opinion in England might attach great importance to this right in certain circumstances and the matter was left over for further unofficial discussion.

6. Subsequently Mr. Rendel and Admiral Bellairs had two long conversations (in the second of which Monsieur Aras took spasmodic part) with Monsieur Numan [Menemençioğlu] and Turkish delegation. On their informing him of substance of their conversation with Soviet delegation Monsieur Numan explained that Turkish Government could only agree to sliding scale being applicable in case of maximum tonnage for non-Black Sea fleets of 45,000 tons. Mr. Rendel pointed out that main object of sliding yardstick, which was to discourage any undue increase in Russian Black Sea fleet, might fail if it were to be subjected to such limitation which might in fact put a premium on intensified building activity which it was not less to the interest of Turkey than to that of other Powers concerned to discourage. Monsieur Numan admitted this but explained that the point would be equally met by Turkish proposal for revision of technical provisions of convention every five years. Objections to such a system of revision were pointed out to him but he insisted that Turkish authorities at Angora would find it quite impossible in view of what he described as 'public opinion' in Turkey to agree at present to total non-Black Sea tonnage in the Black Sea in any circumstances exceeding 45,000 tons.

7. Monsieur Numan then explained that from Turkish point of view non-Black Sea tonnage in the Black Sea could not be increased only as possible check on Russia. It might in certain eventualities be sent into the Black Sea with a view to co-operation with Russia. Although Turkey's relations with Russia were at present entirely satisfactory this possibility

could not be excluded. Mr. Rendel and Admiral Bellairs were quite unable to shake Monsieur Numan and Monsieur Aras on this point and eventually it was agreed to suspend discussion pending further instructions.

8. The question was then discussed of apportionment of global tonnage. With reference to previous Turkish suggestion that total tonnage of 30,000 tons must be divided between at least two non-Black Sea Powers Mr. Rendel explained that Admiralty attached the highest importance to being able to send British ships up to total tonnage limit. He then put forward unofficially suggestion which had been previously worked out with Lord Stanhope and Sir W. Malkin that in the event of increase in total tonnage under operation of sliding scale no one Power should have more than three quarters of total tonnage if that tonnage exceeded 40,000 tons.

9. Monsieur Numan raised strong objection to this proposal and pressed that even 30,000 tons limit must be shared between at least two Powers. He said that if it were only a question of British vessels there would be no difficulty but explained confidentially that from Turkish point of view the matter must be looked at entirely from the angle of possible threat from Italy. He then worked out elaborate hypothetical calculations to show how if our proposal were adopted Turkey might find herself threatened by an Italy possibly allied with e.g. Roumania and able to attack Turkey with 15,000 tons of warships in addition to a like number in the Sea of Marmora and a large fleet in the Mediterranean. Efforts to convince him of unreality of these fears both from political and practical points of view failed to shake him but he was given privately copy of draft article prepared by Sir W. Malkin to give effect to our proposal and matter will be further pursued.

10. Mr. Rendel also raised with Monsieur Numan the question of two exceptional cases referred to in paragraph 5 above. Monsieur Numan raised strongest objections to both. He professed to realize possible desirability of such action but took a line that it could easily be taken by the two Black Sea Powers without involving necessity for interference by other States.

Repeated to Angora Saving, copy to Montreux.

No. 513

Mr. Edmond (Geneva) to Foreign Office (Received June 29, 3.25 p.m.)

No. 80 L.N. Telegraphic [E 3965/26/44]

Immediate

GENEVA, June 29, 1936, 1 p.m.

Following from Secretary of State.

Position of Montreux Conference which is approaching critical phase is as follows.

Turks are insisting on limitation of total tonnage in Black Sea for non-Black Sea Powers of 30,000 tons rising to not more than 45,000 tons under proposed sliding scale whatever the size of the strongest Black Sea fleet.

They are strongly opposed to either of these limits being taken up exclusively by any single Power and at present propose that no Black Sea Power should send more than half of total global tonnage into the Black Sea. It may be possible to raise this to two-thirds of total global tonnage though there could not of course be any guarantee that this would fall to our share. Turkish attitude is due to fear of Italy. I see no hope of Turks agreeing to any specific allotment of tonnage to individual Powers irrespective of global tonnage so that there seems no possibility of getting away from complicated machinery of priority of application involved in global tonnage system. On the other hand if the duration of visit into Black Sea is strictly limited to 15 days as proposed by Turks or even to one month, the delay in sending forces into the Black Sea is hardly likely to be excessive.

Meanwhile I consider it most important that work of Montreux Conference should be brought to an early and successful conclusion. Precise terms of settlement arrived at are less important to us (since Black Sea is not a vital British interest) and I believe to Europe than that settlement should speedily be reached. Effect on general international situation of postponement and possibility of ultimate failure of yet another international conference could not but be deplorable. Nor can I believe that from our point of view total tonnage we may be allowed under this agreement to pass into Black Sea, which I am informed that we in fact but rarely enter, can compare in psychological significance with the importance of early agreement. Moreover in any event there is every prospect of securing relaxation of regulations when action is being taken under decision of the League. It is surely difficult to conceive of some¹ circumstances in which we should wish to send any formidable naval force through the Straits into the Black Sea.

In these circumstances I recommend that we should accept 45,000 tons global maximum limit on sliding scale basis on best conditions possible subject to adequate arrangements for revision of the relevant figures every five years.

If we are to secure agreement and avoid Conference becoming involved in protracted and controversial discussion of technical details broad decisions must be reached here during the present week. M. Delbos and I are already in agreement as to desirability of a meeting between ourselves, Turkey and Soviet Foreign Ministers before we leave Geneva if interim efforts fail. I should therefore be glad of earliest possible reply to this telegram.

It has always to be borne in mind that if Conference fails to reach agreement Turkey may take unilateral action and there have already been certain indications of this in Turkish Press.²

Repeated to Montreux.

¹ This word was queried on the filed copy.

² Cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 389.

No. 514

Foreign Office to Mr. Edmond (Geneva)

No. 51 Telegraphic [E 3965/26/44]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 30, 1936, 10 p.m.*

Your telegrams No. 78¹ and 80.²

Following for Secretary of State from Sir R. Vansittart.

Admiralty fully appreciate the importance of bringing Conference to early and successful conclusion and to meet your wish will accept principle of sliding yardstick (i.e. that the minimum of 30,000 tons should be increased up to a maximum of 45,000 tons by a percentage on any Russian increase over her present tonnage). Admiralty's acceptance is, however, on the assumption that this arrangement is only intended to apply in peace and to neutral warships in time of war.

2. Further, Admiralty are prepared to accept total prohibition of passage of submarines through the Straits both in war and peace.

3. As has been made clear in previous telegrams however, Admiralty are principally concerned with position as affecting belligerent warships and would welcome any information as to how this aspect of the matter stands. They are still anxious to obtain exemption both from Black Sea and Marmora yardsticks for belligerent fleet on basis explained in paragraph 3 of my telegram No. 4³ to Montreux, and feel that it would be unsafe to rely exclusively on a reservation concerning action taken under a decision of the League. They wish to emphasise that in time of war (and also when 'menace of war' has been declared by Turkey under Article 9 of Turkish draft Convention) it might be a matter of importance to be able, (subject to Turkish concurrence if necessary but preferably without it), to send force exceeding small limits imposed by yard-sticks into Black Sea. A situation might for example arise in war with Germany under which naval support for Roumania would be required.

Repeated to Montreux.

¹ No. 512.

² No. 513.

³ Not printed.

No. 515

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 2)

No. 2 Saving: Telegraphic [E 4081/26/44]

MONTREUX, *July 1, 1936*

Following from Mr. Rendel.

My despatch No. 4 of June 25th.¹

¹ This despatch from Lord Stanhope reported that on the afternoon of June 24 the technical committee of the conference discussed section 1 of the Turkish draft convention dealing with commercial shipping, and it was pointed out that the Straits were believed

We are having considerable difficulty over commercial clauses. Turks, notwithstanding their repeated assurances prior to the opening of this conference that all they wanted to do was to secure the right to remilitarise the Straits and to obtain the modification of the clauses regarding passage of warships (including any subsidiary consequential amendments which might follow therefrom) have taken the opportunity in their draft to re-word the relevant provisions of the Lausanne Convention so as to secure the right to impose sanitary dues on merchant vessels passing through the Straits in transit and not calling at any Turkish port. These dues may constitute a heavy charge on international merchant shipping.

It is true that Turkey has in fact levied these dues for some years, but she has no legal justification for doing so, and maritime Powers concerned have continuously protested and contested Turkish action.

Matter was again discussed in Technical Committee this morning and discussion followed previous lines. United Kingdom, French, Bulgarian, Greek and Roumanian delegates all opposed Turkish proposal.

I explained that United Kingdom Delegation had no wish to call in question arrangements made at Lausanne or to raise objection to the rights the Turkish Government had then legally acquired under the Lausanne Convention to charge present dues, heavy as they were, for various services rendered. But in the view of all the other Governments concerned Lausanne Convention gave Turkey no right to charge the particular dues now in dispute. If the Turkish Government insisted on another interpretation of the Lausanne Convention, various means might be devised for obtaining an authoritative and impartial ruling on the question of interpretation, but it was quite another matter to propose the insertion of a new provision in the Convention now under negotiation to legalise the Turkish action, to which exception had been taken, and to secure to Turkey a new right at variance with international practice.

Moreover the present conference had been called for the purpose of revising the military portions only of the convention, and this fact had been much insisted on and note had been taken of it in the reply of His Majesty's Government to the original Turkish invitation. If the Turks now took the opportunity of this conference to impose new burdens on international merchant shipping, the worst impression would be created, and indeed the other Governments concerned would expose themselves to legitimate criticism if they were to agree.

The French representative pointed out that if the conference were to authorise Turkey to charge sanitary dues on vessels in transit, a very dangerous precedent would be created, and other States controlling passages

to be the only waterway in the world in which sanitary and other dues were levied on ships in transit. The U.K. delegation asked for detailed information as to nature and justification of the charges. The Turkish delegation 'showed, however, no signs of yielding on the question of principle. Their explanation was entirely evasive and unsatisfactory.' A minute by Mr. H. L. Baggallay reads: 'I fancy the Board of Trade are more or less resigned to the levy of sanitary dues. L.B. 27/6/36.'

between international seas might be encouraged to adopt a similar procedure. The Bulgarian, Greek and Roumanian delegates all made useful contributions to the discussion, record of which will follow when available.

Turkish Delegation showed no signs of yielding and explained that they had instructions to make no concession on this point, and matter was therefore reserved for further discussion at plenary meeting.

I subsequently had some private talk with M. Numan [Menemençioğlu], and he eventually promised, in the light of this morning's discussion, to consult M. Aras at Geneva this evening as to possibility of returning to the charge with the Turkish Government with a view to proposing a compromise, on lines originally tentatively suggested by Captain Macdonald,² by which reduced dues should be charged only on vessels passing from the Mediterranean into the Black Sea, which would also cover the return journey and constitute, so to speak, a return ticket. I said that if M. Numan would propose this, I would recommend it to His Majesty's Government as a possible solution, though I could not yet say whether they would find it acceptable. I understand from Captain Macdonald however that Board of Trade would be prepared to agree to this. M. Numan was clearly not at all attracted by suggestion that question of interpretation of Lausanne Convention on this point should be referred to any kind of judicial decision or arbitration.

² Captain M. H. S. Macdonald, D.S.O., O.B.E., R.N., was the British representative on the Straits Commission.

No. 516

Letter from Mr. Rendel (Montreux) to Mr. Sterndale Bennett

[E 4175/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 3, 1936

My dear Benito,

I enclose a copy of a redraft of the proposed new convention¹ which we prepared yesterday.

2. We came to the conclusion that the best method of procedure would now be for the United Kingdom Delegation to submit a redraft of the whole convention rather than an endless series of amendments on each point. We have however been obliged to follow the Turkish draft fairly closely, since as you know, the Turkish draft has been officially adopted as the basis of our discussions, and therefore we should hardly be in order in proposing anything which could not be reasonably represented as a redraft of the Turkish draft. As you will have seen from our telegrams, we all felt here that it would have been quite impossible to do anything but take the Turkish draft as a basis

¹ Not printed. The new draft convention as presented to the Conference is printed as No. 517 below. A comparative table of the Turkish and British drafts is printed in *A.C.M.*, pp. 287-98.

of discussion, since, among other reasons, what we came to discuss here was Turkish proposals, and we had all taken the line for weeks that before we could start discussions, we must have detailed Turkish proposals in writing. But the fact that these proposals took the form of a new draft convention would hardly have justified us in saying that we were not going to take them as a basis of discussion. Anyhow, Stanhope, Fitzmaurice² and I were all quite easy in our minds that this was the only possible method of procedure, and we felt that the subsequent Admiralty criticisms of us for not having taken the original convention as a basis were really quite unjustified.

3. The enclosed redraft is intended to take into account all our latest instructions, in the light of the discussions which have taken place at Geneva and the views which the Secretary of State expressed there, and in the light of the course of the recent discussions here (see particularly our telegrams Nos. 2³ and 3⁴ Saving of July 1st).

4. Macdonald has produced a very useful set of suggestions for dealing with the commercial clauses and the question of dues, which he proposes should be set forth in an annex. Fitzmaurice and I agreed that this might offer a very useful basis for future discussion. But I fear it is very unlikely that we shall reach agreement on Article 2 without having to come to some compromise. As you know, the Board of Trade are now prepared in the last resort to agree to Macdonald's suggestion by which ships in transit should pay sanitary dues on entering the Straits from the Mediterranean and get, as it were, a kind of return ticket exempting them from further dues on the way out.⁵ We do not want to put this suggestion in the draft as presented to the conference, but we have drafted an additional paragraph to our draft Article 4, which would meet this point, and we propose to keep it in reserve for presentation at the right moment.

5. As you may have heard, we were able to arrange for Will Malkin⁶ to stop here for an hour or two on his way back from Geneva last night, and we went through the whole of our draft with him, and obtained his general concurrence in it subject to certain minor amendments which we have adopted.

6. Fitzmaurice, Bellairs and I are going over to Geneva immediately after this morning's Technical Committee meeting, to discuss the whole situation further with the Secretary of State, Stanley⁷ and Stanhope, and possibly with Litvino[v], Aras and Paul-Boncour. This may involve some modification in our proposals, but as they are only to serve as the basis for further discussion, and will not commit us very far, I do not think much change will necessarily be required. But now that Stanley has come out to take charge of the Delegation, we will of course take no further action without his approval.

² Mr. G. G. Fitzmaurice was Third Legal Adviser in the Foreign Office.

³ No. 515.

⁴ Not printed.

⁵ Cf. No. 515.

⁶ See No. 9, note 7.

⁷ Lord Stanley, Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty since 1931, succeeded Lord Stanhope as head of the British Delegation at Montreux from July 4.

7. I had meant to continue this letter with a few general remarks about the conference as a whole, but I only have ten minutes before the Technical Committee, and three people have already asked to see me. Immediately after the Technical Committee we shall have to start for Geneva (lunching in the car), and we shall not get back before the departure of the bag. So I have no choice but to end rather abruptly. I will however try to write again more fully by next bag.

8. Incidentally I very greatly hope that I may be able to get back myself towards the end of next week, but I will write about this separately later.

Yours ever,
GEORGE RENDEL

No. 517

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 6)

No. 16 [E 4178/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 5, 1936

The secretary of the United Kingdom delegation to the Montreux Conference presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to enclose the revised version of the Turkish draft convention, submitted by the United Kingdom delegation.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 517

MONTREUX, le 4 juillet 1936

*Nouvelle Version établie le 4 Juillet 1936 par la Délégation du Royaume-Uni du
Projet de Convention turc soumis le 22 Juin*

Préambule

Sa Majesté le Roi de Bulgarie, le Président de la République française, Sa Majesté le Roi de Grande-Bretagne, d'Irlande et des Dominions britanniques au delà des mers, Empereur des Indes, Sa Majesté le Roi des Hellènes, Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie, Sa Majesté l'Empereur du Japon, Sa Majesté le Roi de Roumanie, le Président de la République turque, le Comité central exécutif de l'Union des Républiques soviétiques socialistes et Sa Majesté le Roi de Yougoslavie,

Animés du désir de régler le passage et la navigation dans le détroit des Dardanelles, la mer de Marmara et le Bosphore, compris sous la dénomination générale de 'Détroits,' de manière à sauve garder, dans le cadre de la sécurité de la Turquie, le principe consacré par l'article 23 du traité de paix signé à Lausanne, le 24 juillet 1923;

Ont résolu de substituer la présente convention à la convention signée à Lausanne le 24 juillet 1923 et ont nommé, à cet effet, pour leurs plénipotentiaires respectifs:

Lesquels, après avoir exhibé leurs pleins pouvoirs, reconnus en bonne et due forme, sont convenus des dispositions suivantes :

ARTICLE 1^{er}

Les hautes parties contractantes reconnaissent et affirment le principe de la liberté de transit et de navigation par mer dans les Détroits.

Ledit transit et ladite navigation seront dorénavant réglés par les dispositions de la présente convention.

Section I *Navires de Commerce*

ARTICLE 2

Le terme 'navires de commerce' s'applique à tous les navires qui ne sont pas visés par la Section II de la présente convention.

ARTICLE 3

En temps de paix, les navires de commerce jouiront de la complète liberté de navigation et de transit, de jour et de nuit, quels que soient le pavillon et le chargement, sans aucune formalité, sous réserve des dispositions de l'article 4 de la présente convention. Aucune taxe ou charge autres que celles dont la perception est autorisée par l'Annexe 1 à la présente convention ne sera prélevée par les autorités turques sur ces bateaux lorsqu'ils franchiront les Détroits en transit sans faire escale à un port turc des Détroits.

Afin de faciliter la perception de toute taxe ou charge qui pourrait être prélevée en vertu de l'Annexe 1, les navires de commerce qui franchiront les Détroits feront connaître aux postes indiqués par le Gouvernement turc, leur nom, leur nationalité, leur tonnage, leur destination et leur provenance.

ARTICLE 4

Les navires qui ont à bord des cas de peste, de choléra, de fièvre jaune, de typhus exanthématique ou de variole, ou qui en ont eu il y a moins de sept jours, ainsi que les navires qui ont quitté un port contaminé depuis moins de cinq fois 24 heures, s'arrêteront à un poste sanitaire près de l'entrée des Détroits pour y embarquer les gardes sanitaires que les autorités turques pourraient désigner. Il ne sera pas perçu de taxe relativement à ce personnel, lequel sera débarqué à une station sanitaire à la sortie des Détroits.

Tout navire qui n'est pas visé par l'alinéa précédent du présent article et qui entre dans les Détroits par la mer Égée s'arrêtera à une station sanitaire près de l'entrée des Détroits afin de se soumettre au contrôle sanitaire prescrit par les autorités turques, conformément au règlement turc. Ce contrôle, dans le cas des navires possédant une patente de santé en ordre, s'effectuera de jour et de nuit, avec le plus de rapidité possible, et les navires susmentionnés ne seront tenus de s'arrêter à aucun autre endroit des Détroits au cours de leur passage.

ARTICLE 5

En temps de guerre, la Turquie restant neutre, les navires de commerce jouiront de la liberté de transit et de navigation dans les Détroits sous réserve des dispositions des articles 3 et 4.

Le pilotage reste facultatif.

ARTICLE 6

En temps de guerre, la Turquie étant belligérante, les navires de commerce neutres jouiront de la liberté de transit et de navigation à condition que ces navires n'assistent en aucune façon l'ennemi.

Tous les navires entreront de jour dans les Détroits et le passage devra s'effectuer par la route qui sera, sur demande, indiquée par les autorités turques.

Section II *Bâtiments de Guerre et Navires auxiliaires*

ARTICLE 7

Aux fins de la présente convention, la définition applicable aux bâtiments auxiliaires est celle qui figure dans la Partie I, article 1.B.6 du Traité de Londres du 25 mars 1936,¹ sous réserve de l'exception prévue à l'article 8 ci-dessous.

ARTICLE 8

Le terme 'bâtiments auxiliaires' ne s'applique pas aux bâtiments auxiliaires de la marine militaire spécifiquement conçus pour le transport des combustibles liquides ou autres, ou des approvisionnements destinés à des forces navales.

ARTICLE 9

En temps de paix, les bâtiments de guerre et les navires auxiliaires, exception faite des sous-marins, qu'ils appartiennent à des Puissances riveraines de la mer Noire ou à des Puissances non riveraines de ladite mer, quel que soit leur pavillon, sans aucune taxe ou charge quelconque, jouiront de la liberté de passage dans les Détroits, pourvu qu'ils entrent dans les Détroits de jour, et dans les conditions ci-après spécifiées:

ARTICLE 10

Pour le passage dans les Détroits des navires de guerre et des navires auxiliaires, un préavis de 15 jours devra être donné au Gouvernement turc par la voie diplomatique. Dans ce préavis devront être indiqués la destination, le nom, le type et le nombre des navires.

Lors du passage, le commandant de la force navale communiquera, sans avoir à s'arrêter, à une station de signaux à l'entrée des Dardanelles ou du Bosphore, la composition exacte de la force se trouvant sous ses ordres ainsi que tous renseignements complémentaires relatifs à cette force.

¹ See Volume XIII, No. 718.

ARTICLE 11

Le tonnage global maximum de toutes les forces navales étrangères pouvant se trouver en cours de transit dans les Détroits à un moment quelconque ne devra pas dépasser la moitié du tonnage global de la flotte turque en service effectif au moment du passage, ou 15,000 tonnes si la moitié du tonnage de la flotte turque en service effectif n'atteint pas ce dernier chiffre.

Ne seront pas compris dans ce tonnage les navires appartenant à des Puissances riveraines ou non riveraines de la mer Noire qui, sans être en transit, rendent visite, avec l'autorisation de la Turquie, à un port turc des Détroits.

ARTICLE 12

Les bâtiments de guerre en transit dans les Détroits ne pourront, en aucun cas, utiliser les aéronefs dont ils seraient éventuellement porteurs.

ARTICLE 13

Les bâtiments de guerre en transit dans les Détroits ne devront, sauf en cas d'avarie ou de fortune de mer, y séjourner au delà du temps qui leur est nécessaire pour effectuer leur passage.

ARTICLE 14

Les dispositions des articles précédents ne sauraient en aucune manière empêcher une force navale d'un tonnage ou d'une composition quelconques de rendre visite à un port turc sur l'invitation du Gouvernement turc, à la condition, toutefois, que ladite force, après avoir achevé sa visite, quitte les Détroits par la même route que celle suivie pour l'entrée.

ARTICLE 15

(Tonnage global des forces navales des Puissances maritimes non riveraines de la mer Noire dont le séjour est autorisé en mer Noire.)

Le tonnage global que les Puissances non riveraines de la mer Noire peuvent avoir dans cette mer en temps de paix sera limité de la façon suivante:

- (a) Sauf dans le cas prévu à l'alinéa (b) du présent article, le tonnage global desdites Puissances n'excédera pas un total de 30,000 tonnes.
- (b) Si, à un moment donné, le tonnage en mer Noire de la flotte la plus forte d'une Puissance riveraine dépasse de plus de 10 pour cent le tonnage de la flotte de l'Union des Républiques soviétiques socialistes en mer Noire, comme il est prévu à l'Annexe 2 de la présente convention, le tonnage global de 30,000 tonnes mentionné à l'alinéa (a) sera augmenté d'une quantité égale à ce dépassement jusqu'à concurrence d'un maximum de 45,000 tonnes.
- (c) Le tonnage que l'une quelconque desdites Puissances aura la faculté d'avoir en mer Noire sera limité aux trois quarts dudit tonnage global.

(d) Toutefois, si l'une desdites Puissances désire envoyer une force navale en mer Noire à des fins humanitaires et si elle n'a dans cet mer aucun bâtiment ou qu'une force inférieure à 10,000 tonnes, cette Puissance aura la faculté, sous réserve d'une autorisation spéciale du Gouvernement turc, d'envoyer des bâtiments ou d'accroître la force existante jusqu'à concurrence de 10,000 tonnes, selon le cas, nonobstant toute disposition des alinéas précédents du présent article.

Sauf pour le cas des visites ayant l'objet visé à l'alinéa (d) du présent article, le séjour en mer Noire d'une force navale de l'une quelconque desdites Puissances n'excédera pas un mois.

ARTICLE 16

En temps de guerre, la Turquie restant neutre, les navires de guerre et les bâtiments auxiliaires jouiront d'une complète liberté de transit et de navigation dans les Détroits dans des conditions identiques à celles qui sont stipulées aux articles 9 à 15.

Ces conditions ne seront toutefois pas applicables à une Puissance belligérante au détriment de ses droits de belligérant.

Les droits et devoirs de la Turquie, comme Puissance neutre, ne sauraient l'autoriser à prendre aucune mesure susceptible d'entraver le transit et la navigation dans les Détroits, dont les eaux doivent rester entièrement libres en temps de guerre, la Turquie étant neutre, aussi bien qu'en temps de paix.

Rien dans le présent article ne saurait porter atteinte au droit que confère à la Turquie l'article 18 de la présente convention et qui s'appliquera en temps de guerre, la Turquie étant neutre, comme en temps de paix.

Les navires de guerre des belligérants ne procéderont à aucune capture, ils n'exerceront pas le droit de visite et de fouille et ne se livreront à aucun acte hostile dans les Détroits.

En ce qui concerne le ravitaillement et les réparations, les navires de guerre seront soumis aux dispositions de la Convention XIII de La Haye de 1907 relative à la Neutralité maritime.

ARTICLE 17

En temps de guerre, la Turquie étant belligérante, les dispositions des articles 9 à 14 ne seront pas applicables et le passage des navires de guerre et des bâtiments auxiliaires est entièrement laissé à la discrétion du Gouvernement turc.

ARTICLE 18

Au cas où la Turquie considérerait qu'elle se trouve menacée d'un danger de guerre imminent, elle aurait le droit d'appliquer les dispositions de l'article 17 de la présente convention. S'il fait usage de ce droit, le Gouvernement turc adressera une notification à cet effet aux Puissances parties à la présente convention ainsi qu'au Conseil de la Société des Nations.

Si le Conseil de la Société des Nations, par une majorité des deux tiers,

décide que les mesures ainsi prises par la Turquie ne sont pas justifiées, le Gouvernement turc s'engage à les rapporter.

ARTICLE 19

Les bâtiments de guerre ayant à bord des cas de peste, de choléra, de fièvre jaune, de typhus exanthématique ou de variole, ou en ayant eu depuis sept jours, ainsi que les bâtiments ayant quitté un port contaminé depuis moins de cinq fois vingt-quatre heures, devront passer les Détroits en quarantaine et appliquer par les moyens du bord les mesures prophylactiques nécessaires pour éviter toute possibilité de contamination des Détroits.

ARTICLE 20

Il est reconnu que la Turquie est sur le même pied que toute autre Puissance en ce qui concerne le droit de réglementer le survol de son territoire et de ses eaux territoriales par les aéronefs civils ou militaires et qu'elle possède de plein droit la liberté entière d'établir des zones dont le survol est interdit.

Toutefois, la Turquie s'engage, dans le cadre de la réglementation turque y relative, à fournir les facilités nécessaires pour permettre le passage en toute sécurité des aéronefs civils, quelles que soient leur origine ou leur nationalité, entre l'Europe et l'Asie d'une part et entre la Méditerranée et la mer Noire d'autre part.

ARTICLE 21

La Commission internationale des Détroits instituée en vertu des articles 10 à 16 de la Convention des Détroits signée à Lausanne le 24 juillet 1923 continuera à exercer ses fonctions. Elle aura notamment pour mission, conformément aux dispositions de l'Annexe 3 à la présente convention, de réunir les statistiques et de fournir les renseignements nécessaires pour l'application des articles 11 et 15.

ARTICLE 22

Sous réserve des dispositions de la présente convention qui ont été librement acceptées par la Turquie, la souveraineté de la Turquie demeure intacte sur son territoire et ses eaux territoriales.

ARTICLE 23

Aucune disposition de la présente convention ne porte atteinte aux droits et obligations découlant du Pacte de la Société des Nations pour la Turquie ou pour toute autre haute partie contractante.

ARTICLE 24

La présente convention abroge la Convention concernant le Régime des Détroits qui a été signée à Lausanne le 24 juillet 1923.

ARTICLE 25

La présente convention sera ratifiée et les instruments de ratification seront déposés, aussitôt que faire se pourra, aux archives du Gouvernement de la République française, qui transmettra des expéditions authentiques à chacune des hautes parties contractantes.

La convention entrera en vigueur dès que les instruments de ratification auront été déposés au nom de toutes les Puissances signataires.

La présente convention demeurera en vigueur pour une durée de cinquante ans à compter de la date de son entrée en vigueur, à la condition toutefois que le principe de la liberté de passage et de navigation reconnu et affirmé à l'article 1^{er} de la présente convention demeurera en vigueur sans limite de temps.

Si, deux ans avant l'expiration de ladite période de cinquante ans, aucune haute partie contractante n'a dénoncé la convention, elle demeurera en vigueur jusqu'à ce que deux années se soient écoulées après l'envoi du préavis de dénonciation.

Si la présente convention venait à être dénoncée conformément aux dispositions du présent article, les hautes parties contractantes conviendront de se faire représenter à une conférence en vue de conclure une nouvelle convention.

ARTICLE 26

A l'expiration de chaque période quinquennale à compter de la date de l'entrée en vigueur de la présente convention, chacune des hautes parties contractantes aura le droit de proposer les amendements qui seraient considérés comme nécessaires aux articles 11 et 15 de la présente convention.

Si l'une des hautes parties contractantes désire présenter des amendements, conformément aux dispositions de l'alinéa précédent, elle en avisera chacune des autres hautes parties contractantes trois mois avant l'expiration de la période quinquennale en cours. Ce préavis contiendra l'indication des amendements désirés, ainsi que les motifs de ces propositions.

Si une haute partie contractante propose un amendement, dans les conditions prévues ci-dessus, et s'il est impossible d'aboutir à un accord sur cette proposition par la voie diplomatique, les hautes parties contractantes conviendront de se faire représenter à une conférence qui serait convoquée pour examiner cette question.

(La délégation du Royaume-Uni se réserve de soumettre plus tard le texte des annexes mentionnées dans le corps du présent projet.)

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 6, 11.30 p.m.)

No. 20 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4181/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 6, 1936

Following from British Delegation.

The Conference resumed its plenary sessions this afternoon.¹

After a brief discussion, the new version of the Turkish draft Convention submitted by the United Kingdom Delegation (see my despatch No. 16)² was accepted as a basis of discussion on understanding that it was to be regarded merely as a revise of original Turkish draft, and it was decided to examine it article by article.

At the suggestion of the Turkish Delegation, it was decided to postpone consideration of the preamble until after the text of the Convention had been agreed upon.

Article 1 was accepted in principle subject to a reservation proposed by the Roumanians and supported by the French, regarding reinsertion of reference to freedom of aerial navigation. It was decided to postpone discussions of reservation until Article 20 was reached.

Article 2. No objection.

Article 3. Objections were raised by the Roumanian Delegation on the ground that this Article legalised the levying of sanitary dues. It was however explained by the United Kingdom Delegation that a compromise had been provisionally agreed upon with the Turkish Delegation the terms of which were embodied in Annex I (see my telegram No. 19).³ This compromise was explained in detail as a result of which the objections were withdrawn and it was agreed that the Article should be accepted in principle with the reservation that such acceptance was subject to acceptance of the text of Annex I.

Article 4. At the suggestion of the French Delegation it was agreed that the order of the two paragraphs should be inverted.

The Turkish Delegation requested that the provisions for sanitary control should be extended to cover ships entering the Straits either from the Aegean or from the Black Sea although they undertook that dues should in each case only be charged once for the double journey. This was agreed to by the Conference after the Turkish Delegation had explained that the sanitary dues had already been reduced by 25% which since dues would now only be levied once meant that the total of the dues levied was reduced by something over 60%. At the suggestion of the Roumania Delegation it was agreed to add at the end of the first sentence of the original second paragraph the words 'dans le cadre de la convention sanitaire internationale'.

Article 5 was accepted by the Conference after considerable discussion, the Roumanian Delegation entering a reservation that their acceptance depended on a satisfactory text being agreed to for Article 23.

¹ A.C.M., pp. 59-68.

² No. 517.

³ Not printed.

Article 6. Considerable discussion ranged round the desirability of inserting a further definition of assistance to the enemy. It was, however, explained that the meaning of assistance to the enemy was defined by existing international law and that no further definition was therefore desirable. In these circumstances the text of the Article was accepted unanimously.

No. 519

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 26¹ Telegraphic [E 4223/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 7, 1936, 11.55 p.m.

Following from Lord Stanley.

At this afternoon's meeting² discussion was resumed on Article 11 and the text of the amendment proposed by the Turkish Delegation was circulated. On examination it was found not to follow Article 6(H) paragraph 3 of the original Turkish draft in that all mention was omitted of the words 'la flotte existante' of the maximum limit of 25,000 tons and of prior Turkish authorisation. Text follows by bag.³ The United Kingdom Delegation expressed their inability to accept this amendment pending the receipt of further instructions from His Majesty's Government. Reservations were made by several Delegations regarding the whole text of Article 11 on the ground that they had not yet had time to consider the amended text. Particular reservations were entered regarding the last paragraph, acceptance of which was made dependent on a satisfactory agreement being reached on the text of Article 14.

Articles 12 and 13 were adopted without discussion.

Article 14. The Soviet Delegation suggested that the purpose of visits to Turkish ports in Straits zone should be defined as being visits of courtesy having a limited period. This proposal having been approved by the United Kingdom and Turkish Delegations, was accepted by the Conference. The insertion of the words 'des détroits' after the words 'à un port Turc' was accepted by the Conference. A further amendment was accepted in principle, subject to the text being drawn up by the Drafting Committee, which would make the continuance of the passage after a visit to a Turkish port subject not only to the regulations regarding the tonnage limitations for passage through the Straits, but also to the tonnage limitations in the Black Sea as provided in Article 15.

A report of the discussion on Article 15 will follow.⁴

¹ Despatched in advance of No. 520 below.

² A.C.M., pp. 77-89.

³ Not printed.

⁴ See No. 521 below.

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 25 Telegraphic [E 4217/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 8, 1936, 12.40 a.m.

Following from Lord Stanley.

At the 7th plenary meeting of the Conference this morning¹ discussion was resumed on the United Kingdom draft beginning at Article 7.

Articles 7 and 8 were accepted in principle and referred to the Drafting Committee for minor alterations.

Article 9. There was considerable discussion on the provision for the total prohibition of the passage of submarines. A suggestion was made by the Roumanian Delegation, supported by the Delegations of Bulgaria and the U.S.S.R., that Black Sea Powers should be permitted to pass into the Black Sea submarines acquired from outside and to send such vessels out of the Black Sea into the Mediterranean for purposes of repairs. This suggestion was accepted by the Conference subject to a satisfactory formula being found which would safeguard the general principle of closure of the Straits to submarines. The Soviet representative proposed that the prohibition should be extended to include aircraft carriers. The United Kingdom Delegation, however, declared that they had only accepted the Turkish proposal for the prohibition of submarines out of deference to the requirements of Turkish security but they were in principle averse from all unnecessary restrictions on the passage of warships in time of peace through the Straits and that they could therefore not agree that this prohibition should be extended to aircraft carriers. The Russian representative, supported by the representative of France, insisted on reserving the question until such time as a satisfactory text had been agreed upon for Article 15 and subsequent Articles.

Article 10 was accepted in principle by all Delegations save that of the U.S.S.R. who formulated an amendment to provide that the notice to be given by riparian Powers of the Black Sea should be reduced from 15 days to 3. This amendment was not acceptable to the Conference and the Soviet representative intimated that he must refer the matter to his Government for further instructions.

Article 11. The Soviet representative demanded an amendment which would provide for the passage through the Straits of naval units exceeding 15,000 tons belonging to Black Sea Powers. The Turkish Delegation declared their willingness to accept an addition in the general terms of the last paragraph of Article 6(H) of the original Turkish draft. The discussion was then adjourned in order to give time for consideration of the proposed amendment.²

¹ i.e. July 7; *A.C.M.*, pp. 68-77.

² Telegram No. 39 of July 9 to the Foreign Office reported that Mr. Numan Menemençioğlu had that day informed Mr. Rendel that the Turkish Delegation 'had received an irate

telegram from Angora severely reprimanding them for having agreed to proposal contained in paragraph 1 of Article II of United Kingdom draft allowing for increase in 15,000 ton limit of passage'. The matter had apparently been dealt with personally by the Turkish President. He therefore begged the British Government to abandon 'insistence on this point and accept 15,000 tons as fixed maximum in all circumstances'. Mr. Rendel recommended that 'we should not press this point, particularly as it is somewhat hypothetical and amount of tonnage involved is not likely to be of serious importance'.

No. 521

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8, 4.58 p.m.)

No. 27 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4240/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 8, 1936

Following from Lord Stanley.

My telegram No. 26.¹

Long discussion took place at 8th meeting of conference on the afternoon of July 7th on Article 15.²

Revised United Kingdom text (see pages 16 to 18 of conference documents No. 6 of July 6th, copy by bag)³ as prepared after further discussion with Turkish delegation on July 6th, was taken as basis.⁴

2. Soviet representative proposed that sliding scale should not be brought into operation until strongest Black Sea fleet had increased by 30% instead of 10% as proposed in United Kingdom draft.

3. This point is important if 'Paris Commune's is included in present Russian Black Sea fleet, which will thus amount, as now indicated by Soviet representative, to not less than some 60,000 tons, since this would enable Russia to increase her fleet by 20,000 tons before any corresponding increase could take place in non-Black Sea global tonnage. United Kingdom Delegation therefore resisted amendment, but latter was at the suggestion of the President left over for private discussion between Soviet and United Kingdom Delegations with a view to finding some compromise.

4. Similarly question whether non-Black Sea Global tonnage should increase on percentage or ton for ton basis was left over for private discussion. On both these points the United Kingdom Delegation explained reasons for United Kingdom draft.

5. Soviet representative also proposed that non-Black Sea warships to be allowed into Black Sea should be confined to light surface vessels. This point although it has obvious political importance and although amendment was strongly resisted by United Kingdom delegation, was left over for further exploration by technical committee.

¹ No. 519.

² A.C.M., pp. 82-9.

³ Not printed.

⁴ A.C.M., pp. 60-2.

⁵ The *Pariskaia Kommuna*, of 23,016 tons and twelve 12 in. guns, launched in 1911, is described by F. E. McMurtrie, *The World's Warships* (London, 1937), as one of the three Soviet battleships.

6. Proposal was accepted by conference that in Sub-paragraph 'C' and 'D' of United Kingdom draft 2/3rds [*sic*] should be substituted for $\frac{3}{4}$ for proportion of global tonnage to be held by any one power.

7. Long discussion took place as to definition of words 'humanitarian purposes' in paragraph 'D'.

Conference appeared to accept explanation given by United Kingdom delegation (see minutes by bag)³ and did not stress for further definition.

8. Total limit of stay in Black Sea was reduced from one month to three weeks.

9. Various points including total additional tonnage admissible for humanitarian purposes were left over for private discussion.

10. Discussion with Monsieur Litvinov begins this afternoon.⁶

⁶ Cf. No. 525 below.

No. 522

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 8, 7 p.m.)

No. 28 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4241/26/44]

Important

MONTREUX, July 8, 1936

Following from Lord Stanley.

At plenary meeting of Conference this morning¹ discussion was opened on Article 16 of United Kingdom draft dealing with provision in time of war Turkey being neutral.

2. United Kingdom Delegation had previously (? substituted) redraft (Conf. paper No. 9—copy by bag)² of Article 16 as modified in the light of Mr. Seal's³ telephonic conversation on July 6th with Captain Phillips² and in the light of subsequent conversations with the Turkish Delegation. Effect of this redraft was to give Turkey power, in the event of her considering her security threatened, to prohibit the passage of belligerent vessels, providing the prohibition was equally applied to all belligerents. Redraft also included provision for prohibition of passage of belligerents when no Black Sea Power was involved.⁴

3. Soviet Delegate opened proceedings by tabling new amendment (Conf. paper No. 10—copy by bag)² to replace paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) of revised United Kingdom draft and to run as follows:

'Nevertheless the passage through the Straits shall be prohibited for ships of war and auxiliary vessels of all belligerent States except in the case contemplated in Article 23' (Article 23 safeguards rights and obligations arising out of Covenant of League).

4. Soviet Delegate in defending amendment urged that it would tend to reduce possibility of wars or at least to circumscribe their areas. Full protection would be granted to League States by its reference to Article 23 which

¹ *A.C.M.*, pp. 89-97.

³ Mr. E. A. Seal was a Principal in the Admiralty.

² Not printed.

⁴ *A.C.M.*, p. 90.

established over-riding obligations under Covenant. United Kingdom alternative would place undue responsibility on Turkey and would probably aim at producing same effect in more inconvenient circumstances. Soviet proposal would clarify situation and greatly simplify position of Turkish Government.

5. French Delegation strongly supported Soviet amendment.

6. United Kingdom Delegation pointed out that while Soviet amendment obviously required process of consideration, United Kingdom draft applied, subject only to requirements of Turkish security of which Turkey was the best judge, general principles of international law which could be accepted by all Powers whether signatories to the Convention or Members of the League or not. If serious restrictions on belligerent rights normally enjoyed under international law were to be adopted in present Convention, non-signatory Powers might have strong grievance against Turkey, whose position might become most embarrassing. As regards Soviet proviso regarding rights and obligations under the Covenant, while it was intention of United Kingdom Delegation that provisions of Article 23 should have a general over-riding character, it was not always possible to obtain clear decisions from Council of the League, and provisions must be made for situation which, from League point of view, might remain obscure and confused. It would therefore seem most desirable to deal with this point from aspect of general international law, subject only to proviso regarding Turkish security rather than on lines of Soviet amendment.

7. Turkish Delegate although he had previously accepted United Kingdom draft as giving full satisfaction to Turkish desiderata and had expressed view in private conversation that total prohibition in time of war would be unsatisfactory to Turkey as placing Black Sea at mercy of Russia, failed to give us any effective support and said that subject to confirmation by his government to whom he would report fully by telephone immediately he was prepared to accept Russian amendment.

8. Japanese Delegate while supporting principal arguments advance[d] by United Kingdom Delegation also reserved his attitude pending further instructions.

9. M. Paul-Boncour with support of M. Politis developed further elaborate but faulty arguments in favour of Russian thesis. M. Politis having suggested additions to Article 23, United Kingdom Delegation reserved their attitude on this point.

10. Comments follow as soon as possible.⁵

⁵ See No. 524 below.

Mr. Eden to Mr. Cuénod (Montreux)
No. 13 Telegraphic [E 4206/26/44]

Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 8, 1936, 9.50 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 21.¹

Following for United Kingdom Delegation.

1. Position is understood to be that Soviet Delegate (*a*) has now gone back on earlier understanding that Marmora yardstick should apply to warships of Black Sea Powers;² (*b*) is nevertheless ready to agree that Black Sea warships of over 15,000 tons shall pass through Straits singly; and (*c*) suggests that Russian warships passing through Straits shall do so only for purpose of proceeding to Baltic and Far East and shall not remain in Mediterranean.

2. Following are joint views of Admiralty and F[oreign] O[ffice].

3. With regard to (*c*) we consider that even if it were generally acceptable it would be undesirable to include an arrangement of this kind in new Convention. Such an arrangement could only lead to difficulties with Germany and possibly other Powers without serving any practical purpose in the Mediterranean. Further, when principle of 45,000 tons for the Black Sea yardstick was accepted it was realised that there was nothing to stop Russia sending, if she so desired, the whole of her Baltic Fleet into the Black Sea.

4. With regard to (*b*) we consider that Russian claim to send large ships to and from the Black Sea (which right she possesses today) is reasonable and cannot be resisted. We further consider that since the maximum size of ship allowed by the recent naval treaties is 35,000 tons it would be unreasonable to refuse Russia the right of passage for such a ship if and when she builds it, either in the Black Sea or the Baltic.

5. With regard to (*a*) this claim by Russia does not seem to be as well-founded as the other two claims. But the matter is primarily one for Turkey and if that country agrees it would be out of the question for us to maintain our opposition to the extent of causing a breakdown. We consider, however, that an effort should be made to put Russia and other Black Sea Powers on the same basis as remaining naval Powers in respect of the general Marmora yardstick. If this is not obtained, apart from criticism in this country, difficulties with Germany might be increased.

6. We agree therefore that you should endeavour, before accepting Russian demand (*b*) and, in last resort (*a*), to obtain desiderata of His Majesty's Government in regard to belligerent rights.

7. We further suggest that the Delegation should consider possibility of obtaining from Soviet Representative some assurance in regard to curtailment of number of sub-category A cruisers which they propose to construct,

¹ Montreux telegram No. 21 of July 7 reported that the Soviet delegate was pressing for the proposed 15,000 tons limitation on transit of warships through the Straits to apply only to non-Black Sea powers.

² See No. 512.

before we finally agree to Russian proposals under (a) and (b). There is a logical connexion between these two points, seeing that acceptance of Russian desiderata under (a) and (b) will unquestionably increase our difficulties in the naval sphere with Germany, and we feel it essential that the Soviet Government should meet us at some point unless they wish their policy to lead to the breakdown of the whole structure of naval treaties which we are at present attempting to build up. The present position of the cruiser question is that Russia is asking for 10 7·1-inch gun 8,000 ton cruisers (including one already built), and we want to keep this figure down to 8 (including the existing ship) as we consider that this is the maximum number which Soviet Russia could construct without certainty of both Germany and Japan increasing their sub-category A cruiser tonnage and so leading to breakdown of cruiser holiday.

No. 524

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office¹ (Received July 9, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 29 Telegraphic [E 4260/26/44]

Important

MONTREUX, July 9, 1936, 1.25 a.m.

Following from Lord Stanley.

My telegram No. 28.²

Soviet amendment marks important change in Soviet Government's attitude in that for peace time it proposes identic treatment both for the Black Sea and for non-Black Sea Powers and shows that Soviet Government are, in regard to this important point, prepared to abandon their previous insistence on differential treatment.

(2) If we could assume in all circumstances that the Covenant would work as it was designed to work, Soviet Draft would be acceptable: we should never be engaged in hostilities except in fulfilment of our obligations under the Covenant and we should receive all facilities which would be denied to the aggressor.

(3) Defect in Soviet Draft is that it categorically enjoins the closure of the Straits to belligerents except in the case where these are acting under the Covenant, and apart from position of Powers members of the League, there may be cases when the Covenant does not work and the League is unable to designate aggressor. In that case for instance we should be unable to carry out operations in the Black Sea for three weeks . . .³ should we be at war with the U.S.S.R. or to bring assistance to a Black Sea Power against Germany before the League procedure as contemplated in Article 23 had begun to work.

(4) Question is whether the risk of this is considered to be so great as to warrant our maintaining opposition to amendment which can of course be easily supported on purely logical grounds. It is possible to make a strong

¹ See No. 423, note 1.

² No. 522.

³ The text was here uncertain.

case against it as we have done but I much doubt from the temper of the Conference here whether we shall either bring round the other delegations to our point of view or avoid a deadlock if we persist in our present objection. A ready acceptance of Russian proposal, however, might greatly facilitate agreement on other matters such as Article 11 and would no doubt do much to further early conclusion of a satisfactory settlement.

(5) On the other hand I appreciate that the matter is one of great importance from the point of view of principle, and that you may see overwhelming objections to Russian proposals.

(6) Matter was reserved pending reference to governments.

I should welcome very early instructions.⁴

⁴ For comments by the French delegation to Montreux on the Anglo-Soviet differences see *D.D.F., op. cit.*, No. 421.

No. 525

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 9, 9.45 a.m.)

No. 30 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4256/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 9, 1936

Following from Lord Stanley.

Monsieur Litvinov called on me this afternoon¹ to discuss four points arising out of the discussion at plenary sessions of clauses of British draft concerning the security of Black Sea Powers.

[He] first raised the question of the 'Sliding yard-stick'. He explained that he had understood during discussions at Geneva that the increase of the global tonnage to be admitted into the Black Sea as well as of the largest Black Sea fleet would be on a percentage basis and not on that of ton for ton. Mr. Rendel replied that when the discussions had taken place idea of a 'ceiling' of 45,000 tons had not been contemplated and that the 'Paris Commune'² had not been included in the total Russian tonnage which meant that the basic Russian figure would have been about 35,000 tons instead of the 60,000 tons which we had not accepted. Monsieur Litvinov maintained that the new British proposals for ton for ton increase was [*sic*] inequitable in that large proportion of the Russian fleet was out of date whereas other Powers could always send new ships to the Black Sea. It was pointed out to him that out of this Russian tonnage could be replaced and that in any case it was not a comparison of the initial tonnages of 30,000 and 60,000 which was important but a comparison of the increase in tonnage above those figures.

2. Monsieur Litvinov then declared that he would accept either a proportional increase above 10% or a ton for ton increase above 30%. I suggested to him in return that a compromise might be reached on the lines of the following draft text:

¹ i.e. July 8.

² See No. 521, note 5.

When the tonnage of the strongest Black Sea fleet shall exceed 60,000 tons by 10,000 tons the global maximum for non-Black Sea Powers shall be increased by a similar amount of 10,000 tons: and when the tonnage of the strongest Black Sea fleet shall be increased by a further 5,000 tons the global maximum for non-Black Sea Powers shall also be increased by a further 5,000 tons.

3. This text is designed to avoid all controversy regarding the basic figure for the tonnage of the Russian fleet as well as regarding the percentage calculations and in addition to avoid the risk of the Soviet Government increasing their Black Sea fleet before the provisions of the convention come into force.

4. Monsieur Litvinov said that he would recommend this solution to his government.

5. We then discussed the question of limiting ships passing through the Straits to 'light surface vessels'. It was explained to Monsieur Litvinov that this amendment, which was obviously and admittedly directed against German pocket battleships, would probably lead to a great deal of trouble because it would give Germany a certain justification for objecting to the terms of the convention on the grounds that it contained a limitative clause directed solely against her.

6. It was further pointed out to him that it would be surely unwise for Russia to allow her fear of a danger which was essentially illusory to leave [?lead] her to press for the insertion in the convention of clauses which would almost inevitably lead to serious political trouble. Monsieur Litvinov replied that Germany would probably object to the convention in any case, but we emphasised the undesirability of giving her such obvious justification for doing so. Monsieur Litvinov replied by saying that it would be useless for him to refer the matter back to Moscow but I believe that he began to see the force of our argument, as on leaving he said that he would communicate with his government.

7. Monsieur Litvinov then raised the question of prior notification to the Turkish Government for the passage of ships through the Straits. He explained that the Soviet Government wished in cases of emergency to be able to send ships through the Straits at three days' notice instead of 15. I informed him that the Turkish Government were prepared to accept 10 days for *all* notifications and to insert in the conditions a strong recommendation that non-Black Sea Powers should give longer notification whenever possible. In the view of His Majesty's Government the question of priority of application as well as of the actual passage of the Straits would be complicated if there were two different periods of notice in operation and that in any case it might well be in the interests of the Soviet Government to have a period of notification equal to that of other Powers. It was eventually decided that the British delegation should consult the Turkish delegation and that the matter should then be taken up again with Monsieur Litvinov.

Could we be granted some latitude in regard to this question which seems not to be of essential importance?

No. 526

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 9, 1 p.m.)

No. 34 Telegraphic [E 4273/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 9, 1936, 12.5 p.m.

Following from Lord Stanley.

My telegram No. 31.¹

Object of French and Roumanians is clearly to ensure that Black Sea would be open to them but closed to Germany in the event of a war which might bring mutual assistance pacts into operation but in which for some reason the League action might fail. Object of Russians (in addition to their general desire to make Black Sea as far as possible a Russian lake) is similar.

Solution may be afforded by amendments suggested in course of conversation with M. Boncour by which Turkey's obligation to make no discrimination between belligerents would be subordinated to any obligations which might be incumbent on her under her existing treaty obligations to discriminate without actually participating in war as a belligerent. But if Turkey's treaty obligations do in fact give her this right of discrimination it is for consideration whether they are at present valid since they would seem to run counter to provisions of Treaty of Lausanne regarding freedom to exercise belligerent rights.

¹ This telegram of July 9 to the Foreign Office described a discussion with MM. Paul-Boncour and Ponsot on the evening of July 8 on matters raised at the 9th plenary session that morning: cf. *A.C.M.*, pp. 89-97.

No. 527

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 10)

No. 35 Telegraphic [E 4324/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 9, 1936

Following from British Delegation.

Discussion on the British draft was resumed this morning¹ beginning with Article 17. It was suggested by the United Kingdom delegation that it might be desirable to add a sentence to the present text to provide for the continued freedom of passage of merchant ships. Subject to this suggestion, the Article was accepted by the Conference in principle and referred to the drafting committee.

2. Article 18. The Japanese delegation entered a reservation regarding all those parts of the Article dealing with reference to the League of Nations, but accepted the principle involved in the first paragraph. The Soviet delegation suggested that provisions on the lines of the 5th and 6th paragraphs of the amended text of Article 16 (see my telegram No. 29)² should be

¹ *A.C.M.*, pp. 98-107.

² No. 524.

inserted in this article to make it possible for the warships of any State, other than that from which Turkey considered herself to be under menace, to return to their bases. The Roumanian delegation proposed an amendment on a more comprehensive scale providing that the right to close the Straits should only be applied to the fleet of the Power from whom Turkey considered herself threatened. After a lengthy discussion it was decided that the Soviet and Roumanian delegations should each prepare a text of their respective amendment and that these two texts should be considered by the Technical Committee.

3. Article 19 was accepted subject to a reference to the drafting committee as to the most suitable place in the Convention for the article to appear.

4. Article 20. The Turkish delegation explained that the whole Convention in process of negotiation dealt solely with the Straits zone as defined in the preamble. It was therefore outside the scope of the Convention to provide in such terms as 'between Europe and Asia' for the passage of aircraft. This was solely a matter within the competence of the Turkish Government, who were nevertheless fully prepared to ensure the safe passage of aircraft both up and down the Straits and across the Straits zone provided that there was no question of flying immediately over the fortified zones which it was proposed to create. The Turkish delegation suggested that they should submit an alternative text for the last sentence of paragraph 2. This suggestion was accepted by the Conference and discussion was reserved till the amendment should be available.

5. Article 21. The Turkish delegation demanded outright the complete omission of this article and was immediately supported by the Roumanian delegation. The United Kingdom delegation explained their reasons for desiring that the Commission should continue to exist and the French delegation expressed their complete concurrence in these views. After further lengthy discussion it was agreed that there was a complete opposition of views on the question of whether the Straits Commission should or should not continue to exist and that concession on one side or the other was the only solution. It was, however, suggested that once this question of principle had been solved, it might be possible to find some compromise under which the work, which it was intended that the Commission should carry out, should be entrusted in some manner to both the Turkish authorities and e.g. the diplomatic or consular representatives at Constantinople of the parties to the Convention. I added that my instructions on this point were quite definite and I could not, therefore, discuss the matter further without reference to my government.

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 10)
No. 37 Telegraphic [E 4310/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 9, 1936

Following from British Delegation.

My telegram No. 29.¹

M. Numan [Menemençioğlu] raised with Mr. Rendel today question of Soviet amendment. He said that explanations given by United Kingdom Delegation had made great impression on Turkish Delegation, and that he would like some supplementary elucidations.

In the first place supposing Soviet amendment were to be accepted, with whom would responsibility lie for preventing a belligerent fleet from passing through the Straits?

On Mr. Rendel replying that responsibility would obviously lie with Turkey, M. Numan said that he thought that this would render Soviet amendment wholly unacceptable. It was one thing for Turkey to have the right, if she felt her own security threatened, to close the Straits to both belligerents on her own responsibility, as proposed in latest version of United Kingdom draft; it would be quite another for her to be bound to take possible forcible action against a Power with whom she had no quarrel and who might not be a signatory to the Convention, and therefore not regard itself as bound by it in order to carry out the obligation which the Soviet amendment would now impose on her. He had developed this argument at length to M. Aras and had telegraphed the substance of it fully to the Turkish Government, who would certainly instruct the Delegation in no circumstances to accept the Soviet amendment.

Mr. Rendel reminded M. Numan that these arguments had already been developed to him at length by the United Kingdom Delegation, and that it was for this very reason and in the interests of Turkey herself as much as of anyone else that the United Kingdom Delegation had devised the draft which they had submitted. He added that we had all somewhat regretted the fact that Turkey had not been able to take a more definite line on this point when it was first discussed in the conference. M. Numan gave Mr. Rendel to understand that this would be remedied when the subject next came up for discussion.

¹ No. 524.

No. 529

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 10)
No. 38 Telegraphic [E 4311/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 9, 1936

Following from British Delegation.

My telegram No. 30.¹

M. Litvinov is now anxious that the draft text for the tonnage allowed for non-Black Sea Powers in the Black Sea should omit the figure of 60,000 tons and merely refer to the strongest Naval Power in the Black Sea, as originally proposed. He says he does not wish this figure of 60,000 tons to appear in a Convention over a long period of years.

2. Text he proposes would read as follows:

'When the tonnage of the strongest Fleet in effective service in the Black Sea shall exceed, by more than 10,000 tons, the strength of the strongest Fleet in that Sea at the date of signature of the present Convention, the global tonnage of 30,000 tons shall be increased by equal amounts up to a maximum of 45,000 tons. For this purpose each Black Sea Power shall communicate to the Turkish Government, twice a year, the global tonnage of its Fleet in the Black Sea'.

3. The U.S.S.R. Naval Representative has assured us that the first return in these circumstances would indicate a global tonnage of about 60,000 tons. He also stated that the return might be in the form of the present return to the Straits Commission, showing the units in the different categories making up the total tonnage.

4. I propose to agree to the U.S.S.R. text subject to points of detail.

¹ No. 525.

No. 530

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 10, 2.40 p.m.)
No. 41 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4326/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 10, 1936

Following from Lord Stanley.

Discussions on the British draft was [*sic*] resumed yesterday afternoon and the remaining articles were discussed.¹

2. Article 22.

The Roumanian delegation raised objection to the phrase 'which has been freely accepted by Turkey' on the ground that it formed a dangerous precedent. The United Kingdom Delegation explained the reason for the inclusion of these words but expressed their willingness not to insist on their retention. They pointed out, however, the necessity of maintaining the

¹ This was the eleventh session; *A.C.M.*, pp. 107-19.

balance between the two principles involved in the Article, i.e. the provisions of the Convention on the one hand and Turkish sovereignty on the other.

3. Article 23.

An amended version of this Article was presented to the conference by the Soviet Delegation (see my telegram No. 38)² and the discussion which followed was on this amendment.

4. The Soviet proposal was warmly supported by the French Delegation, who declared that some such provision in favour of pacts concluded within the framework of the League was an essential condition of France's signature of the Convention. The Turkish Delegation, while reserving the right to consider the matter with the greatest care, requested the Soviet Delegation to give certain explanations of their intention in putting forward this draft. The United Kingdom Delegation explained, that, while they had not had time to consider the matters raised by the new draft text as fully as their importance required, they foresaw various difficulties, for instance, the possibility that, if the text were accepted, it might lead to certain situations in which Turkey would find herself in a most embarrassing position. The Japanese Delegation explained that although Japan was no longer a member of the League of Nations, they had no objections to some form of overriding clause which would take account of the obligations and rights of those signatories who were members of the League. Under the Covenant these obligations had been defined and were generally known; but the Soviet amendment went very much further and wished to bring in a whole series of pacts, not only those already concluded, but also those which might be concluded in the future, provided they were within the framework of the League of Nations. These pacts imposed on the signatories vast and ill-defined additional obligations and the Japanese Delegation, while reserving their final decision on the whole Article, declared that they were unable to accept the extension of the principle of the original British draft in the manner intended by the Soviet amendment.

5. The Conference then listened to an impassioned appeal from M. Titulescu, who challenged the right of any one and in particular Great Britain to demand that Roumania should forego the assistance to which she was entitled under the Balkan Pact and the Franco-Roumanian Alliance. Unless provision were made to allow the operation of these pacts, Roumania could in no circumstances be a party to this Convention. The United Kingdom Delegation explained that, while the whole matter was one of great importance and they must therefore reserve their final attitude pending a further examination of the text and the receipt of instructions from His Majesty's Government, they could declare there and then that they had no desire to interfere in any way with the rights and obligations of other countries arising out of agreements which they had signed.

6. After some further inconclusive discussion, the whole discussion was adjourned in order to allow the various Delegations to receive the necessary instructions.

² No. 529.

7. Article 24 was accepted.

8. Article 25.

The Turkish Delegation put before the Conference considerations which have been frequently expressed by M. Numan regarding the necessity from the point of view of the Turkish Government of providing that the Convention should be brought into force without waiting for the ratification of all the signatories. They explained that the original Turkish draft had been so conceived as to bring the Convention into force as from the date of signature. The difficulties involved in this procedure were appreciated and the Turkish Delegation were accordingly prepared not to insist upon it. On the other hand this was conditional on their receiving satisfaction on two points: (a) the Convention should be brought into force by a majority of ratifications and (b) at the time of the signature of the Convention a protocol should also be signed whereby the signatories gave to Turkey in as far as they were concerned the right to remilitarise the Straits Zone and to invoke the provisions of Article 18 in the event of her being involved in a threat of war. The United Kingdom Delegation explained the legal difficulties involved in the abrogation of an existing Convention without the full consent of all the parties and stressed the fact that such full consent is only given with ratification. This question was referred to the Technical Committee for close study by the legal experts.

9. There was also considerable discussion regarding the duration of the Convention. The Turkish Delegation desired to return to the term of 15 years which had figured in their original draft and in this they were supported by the Soviet Delegation, who were inclined to think that even this short period was too long in the light of the rapidly changing international situation of today. The objection to such a short period of years was explained by the United Kingdom Delegation, in reply to which the Turkish Delegation suggested that a compromise might be found on the basis of a duration for a generation. The Turkish Delegation promised to submit a re-draft of the Article covering both these points and that of the bringing into force of the Convention.

10. Article 26.

The Roumanian Delegation wished to extend the provision for the possibility of quinquennial revision to the whole body of the Convention instead of merely to the articles referring to tonnage figures. After a somewhat rambling discussion the Turkish Delegation suggested a compromise and promised to submit a new draft of the Article which would provide (a) that revision of the provisions of Articles 11 and 15 should be effected by a decision of two-thirds of the parties, including Turkey, and (b) that such revision of the remaining provisions of the Convention should only be effected by unanimity.

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 11, 7.25 p.m.)

No. 42 Telegraphic [E 4338/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 11, 1936, 5 p.m.

Following from Lord Stanley.

Your telegram No. 13.¹

M. Litvinoff this morning told Sir A. Cadogan that his Government must insist that large Russian units (exceeding 15,000 tons) could not be expected to pass through the Straits without escort.

Sir A. Cadogan told him that this was raising a fresh difficulty. Russian Delegation have not yet been informed of your attitude as described in your telegram under reference and Sir A. Cadogan did not indicate to M. Litvinoff what it was. He pointed out however that even though it might be considered reasonable that Russia should not be debarred by 15,000 ton rule from sending a unit of her fleet from one Russian port to another, to demand that such a unit should be escorted by other vessels would mean that Russia was freed from 15,000 ton rule which applied to all other countries. He expressed the fear that these successive demands were not likely to facilitate the grant of concessions that Russia desired. Moreover he questioned necessity for or efficacy of escort in the Straits.

M. Litvinoff replied that his Government regarded this as a vital point. He had asked the[m] to reconsider it in order to overcome Turkish objection but they had refused and Turks have now accepted it. Further he said it was no new demand and that he had indicated to the conference that he would make it. This is a half truth: on July 7th he claimed that these large units must be allowed passage 'even if necessary with an escort' and he proposed to submit later an amendment on the subject. But this he never did nor did he mention the question of escort when speaking to us privately about passage of large units. The demand seems to us to be unreasonable more especially as we are dealing with passage in peace time. It is unfortunate that Turks should as usual have given way to pressure by Russians. Do you want us to maintain our opposition? I suggest we might at the proper moment inform M. Litvinoff that we are authorised to agree to passage of large units singly but that we have no authority to agree to escort and see whether and how strongly he persists in the demand.²

¹ No. 523.

² Foreign Office telegram No. 15 of July 13 to Montreux said that as the principle that Russia might send large ships to and from the Black Sea had been conceded (No. 523), the Admiralty did not attach importance to the question of escorts. 'If, therefore, Turks, who are primarily concerned, are prepared to accept Russian demand on this point, you should not maintain opposition to it except in so far as you think it advisable to do so for bargaining purposes.'

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Foreign Office (Received July 12, 12.15 p.m.)
No. 43 Telegraphic [E 4365/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 12, 1936, 9.18 a.m.

Following from Lord Stanley.

Question of the pacts concluded within the framework of the Covenant is assuming more and more importance and I consider a decision should be obtained in the very near future as to how far we can go towards meeting point of view of those delegations who wish to include a provision concerning this matter.

2. I fully appreciate force of objections technical and otherwise which you feel against any reference to obligations other than those arising under the Covenant but I feel it necessary to draw your attention to arguments used by those who advocate Soviet amendment to Article 23 in order that you may be able fully to realise difficulties that we shall have in opposing it.

3. Convention as at present drafted gives Turkey the right if she considers her security threatened in time of war when she is not a belligerent to shut the Straits to belligerent fleets, but only to fleets of *both* sides, and consequently advocates of this amendment are able to complain that by this convention we should deprive Turkey of the right, or obligation, under the pacts to which she is a party, to exercise the discrimination which she would be entitled or bound to exercise by virtue of those pacts. Answer might be that *ex hypothesi* the situation is one in which Turkey is a neutral. There would however be nothing to prevent her becoming a belligerent in which case she would be entitled to discriminate and to give effect to her pact obligations. However these considerations do not altogether meet the argument that it is impossible for Turkey and those who advocate this amendment to sign a convention which, on the face of it, debars Turkey being non-belligerent from doing what she is bound to do under the pacts which she has signed.

4. As regards pacts to which Turkey is not a party the argument that it is unreasonable to bind Turkey to fulfil obligations deriving from the pacts of which she is not a signatory will be met by the argument that these pacts are part of the peace-keeping machinery and that nothing should be done to put any obstacle in the way of their fulfilment.

5. If Governments concerned can plausibly represent that we are asking them to limit the efficiency of their pacts they can make political capital out of it; they can say that they, in their desire to devise machinery for maintaining peace and restraining an aggressor in cases where the Covenant is not effective, have followed the example of Locarno and signed those pacts; that we are always encouraging them to continue in this direction but that in practice we are now seeking to hamper application of the policy which we affect to encourage and that they will try to manoeuvre us into position of appearing to put difficulties in the way of effective application of

peace-keeping machinery, and this on a point where they do not see that in practice our own interests would be adversely affected.

6. We are further handicapped by the fact that it is undesirable to employ one of the strongest arguments against amendment i.e. likelihood of Germany taking umbrage.

7. Another very strong argument against amendment is that it is even more logical in this convention to bind Turkey to observe future pacts which have not yet been negotiated or even proposed. Moreover we do not know how such future pacts may react to our detriment. We might have expected Turkish delegation to raise these points but so far they have shown a reluctance to do so. We have reason to think they see the force of these difficulties but they have evidently been prevailed upon not to raise them.

8. Consequently if our opposition is to be maintained our case will have to be very carefully framed. French delegate has told us privately that for his Government this is one of the vital points and that they could never sign a convention which did not meet them in it. Attitude of all other delegations save the Japanese seems to be the same. It is therefore quite possible that an uncompromising attitude on our part may produce a break.

9. On the other hand accommodating attitude might result in a convention that would be acceptable to us on other points.

10. It may interest you to know that Mr. Bruce feels that unless we consider our own interests really demand it he would not like to press opposition on this point to the last.

11. If we can think of any suggestion for possible means of overcoming difficulty we will send further telegram.

No. 533

Memorandum¹ on the Montreux Conference by Lord Halifax, acting for Mr. Eden

[E 4457/26/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 13, 1936

The Montreux Conference is developing in a way to raise issues of wider scope than could be foreseen when the Cabinet approved the memorandum which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs circulated to them on the 15th June—i.e., just before the opening of the conference (see C.P. 168(36)),² and which constituted the instructions to the United Kingdom Delegation at Montreux.

2. The Turkish desire to remilitarise the Straits has met with no opposition, but on the subsidiary question of the passage of warships through the Straits in time of war, Turkey being neutral, a deadlock is threatened on an

¹ Circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 196(36).

² No. 504.

important question of principle. The issue raised affects not merely our policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and therefore the Near East in general, but threatens to involve the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and thus our whole ship-building programme and our general European policy in relation to Germany and France.

3. The 1923 Convention provided that, in time of war when Turkey was neutral, the restrictions imposed by it should not apply to any belligerent Power to the prejudice of its belligerent rights in the Black Sea. In other words, the 1923 Convention allowed all belligerent non-Black Sea Powers to send unlimited forces into the Black Sea.

4. The Conference began its work on the basis of a Turkish draft, but the present basis is a revised version of the Turkish draft prepared by the United Kingdom Delegation and submitted to the Conference on the 4th July.³ This question of the right of belligerent warships to pass the Straits, in time of war when Turkey is neutral, is dealt with in Article 16 of the United Kingdom draft, of which a copy is attached as Annex A.⁴ The general effect of this Article—which was agreed upon with the Turks before it was submitted to the Conference—is that in the event of a war, when at least one of the belligerents was a Black Sea Power, a non-Black Sea belligerent would be able to send through the Straits unlimited naval forces unless Turkey considered her security menaced, in which case she would have the right to close the Straits to all belligerent fleets, provided that she applied this measure impartially.

5. This Article must be read in conjunction with Article 23 of the British draft (see Annex B),⁵ which is a general overriding clause reserving the rights and obligations of all the Signatories, including Turkey, under the Covenant of the League. The effect of the two Articles read together would give Turkey the right to discriminate between belligerent fleets only if Article 16 of the Covenant were being applied, or possibly in the event of a war under Article 15(7) of the Covenant.

6. The Soviet Delegation, in combination with the French and strongly supported by the Roumanian Delegation, have now put forward amendments (copies in Annexes C and D)⁶ to Articles 16 and 23 of the British draft, the effect of which would be that Turkey would be obliged to close the Straits to all belligerent warships, except those acting in virtue, not only of the Covenant, *but of any regional pact which may now exist or be concluded in the future within the framework of the Covenant*, whether Turkey is a party thereto or not, and irrespective of any pronouncement by the League.

7. These amendments, which the French, Russians and Roumanians have strongly pressed, are designed to facilitate the operation of the Franco-

³ See No. 517, Enclosure.

⁴ See Annex 1 below. This gives in fact a revised version of the draft of this clause, which had originally been circulated to the members of the conference on July 4 (No. 517, Enclosure). The revised version was presented to the conference at the ninth session on July 8 by Mr. Rendel, who explained that the text had been amended 'at so to speak the eleventh hour' as the result of informal suggestions (No. 522; A.C.M., p. 90).

⁵ See Annex 2 below.

⁶ See Annexes 3 and 4 below.

Soviet Pact and the Franco-Roumanian alliance and to a lesser degree the Balkan Pact by obliging Turkey to discriminate in favour of the parties to such pacts. Since, under the United Kingdom draft, Turkey would be entitled so to discriminate in cases where the Covenant bound or authorised her to do so, the object of these amendments is presumably to oblige Turkey to discriminate in cases where (a) the Covenant is not applicable, or (b) the question whether it was applicable was uncertain because there had been no pronouncement on the point by the League.

8. The Turks much dislike this proposal, which they realise would impose upon them the obligation to implement pacts to which they themselves might not be parties to the extent of embroiling themselves with the Power against which the pact was being operated. They are, however, obviously much afraid of the Russians and it seems doubtful whether Turkish resistance alone will succeed in preventing the French and Russians from getting their amendment generally accepted.

9. The attitude which the United Kingdom Delegation has hitherto taken up is that His Majesty's Government will accept a provision (article 23 of the United Kingdom draft) enabling Turkey to discriminate between belligerents in virtue of the Covenant, that they might even agree to such a proviso in the case of Treaties to which Turkey herself is a party, but that they cannot agree to a provision which would oblige Turkey to discriminate (in cases where the Covenant was not applicable) in favour of the signatories of mutual assistance pacts to which she is not a party, more particularly when this discrimination would apply not only in the case of pacts already concluded, but in the case of any future pacts, the scope and effect of which cannot at present be foreseen. Opposition by His Majesty's Government, however, to the Russian amendments may easily lend itself to misrepresentation of their attitude towards regional pacts in general, and thus to serious misunderstanding with France. His Majesty's Government may find themselves accused—in fact, M. Titulescu has already made the accusation—of going back upon their previous support of the idea of regional pacts within the framework of the Covenant. A special difficulty arises in the case of the Franco-Soviet Pact, since His Majesty's Government have hitherto supported the French view that this pact is in entire conformity with the Covenant. But the answer is, of course, that the question now at issue is not whether the Franco-Soviet Pact is in accordance with the Covenant, but whether it is right that the new Straits Convention, and His Majesty's Government as a signatory of that Convention, should place upon Turkey an obligation to assist in the implementing of that pact, to which she is not a party, in circumstances where there would be no obligation upon her to act under the Covenant, and thereby to commit an unneutral act.

10. The matter has a very practical side, since, if the Russian amendments are accepted, serious trouble with Germany will almost certainly follow. Germany, though not a party to the Straits Convention of 1923, and never having taken advantage of the accession clause which would have allowed her to become a party, has always acquiesced in that Convention, which

at present is not at variance with any principle of international law, and does not involve Turkey in the necessity of taking what might be regarded as unneutral action. Notwithstanding her claim to equality of treatment, she may judge it convenient to acquiesce in any new Convention which gives her reasonable facilities, of general application to all Powers, even though these may involve the diminution of the facilities which she, again in common with all other Powers, has enjoyed under the existing Convention. On the other hand, it seems clear that the Russian amendments are specifically designed by Russia, France and Roumania to discriminate against Germany. Further evidence of a similar design is provided by another Russian amendment, which proposes that the right of passage of warships through the Straits should be confined to 'light surface vessels,' as defined in the London Treaty of the 25th March, 1936.⁷ This amendment would exclude the German pocket battleships from the Black Sea in peace time.

11. It seems clear that Germany will not accept without protest a convention which can thus be interpreted as involving discrimination against her. Moreover, if the amendment to Article 23 which the French, Russians and Roumanians desire is inserted in the new convention, Germany will regard it as a proof that the Franco-Soviet Pact was simply in the nature of a military alliance directed against her, and the consequences may be extremely serious. Germany is already paying a good deal of attention to the Montreux Conference. Misapprehensions (which steps have been taken to remove) on the question of the passage of warships through the Straits, as affecting Russia, recently led the German Minister for Foreign Affairs to warn His Majesty's Government that in certain circumstances the German Government might have to invoke the 'escalator' clause of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. It seems doubtful whether anything which is being proposed at Montreux could give Germany a legally valid reason for taking such action, but the question is a psychological one, and the possibility of a German reaction which might seriously affect the Anglo-German Naval Agreement cannot be ruled out. At all events, should there be any discrimination against Germany, however much concealed, in the new Straits Convention, especially if His Majesty's Government subscribe to that discrimination, Germany will interpret the negotiation of the convention as a further step in the policy of 'encirclement' and will take an even more uncompromising and difficult line than she has already taken in European affairs in general. The repercussions on European politics may thus be very wide.

12. In such circumstances the question naturally arises whether steps should not be taken to ensure that Germany is invited to join the Montreux Conference. It is clearly invidious that His Majesty's Government should be placed in the position at Montreux of defending, as against Russia, France and Roumania, what is in the main a German interest. It is true also that by sponsoring an invitation to Germany His Majesty's Government may be

⁷ See Volume XIII, No. 718.

advancing the cause of closer German co-operation in European politics generally. There are, however, serious drawbacks. There is every reason to believe that the other Powers represented at Montreux would refuse to agree to an invitation being sent to Germany, especially as, if Germany were invited, there is no reason why other maritime Powers, who had nothing to do with the original Straits Convention, should not also be invited. It is also by no means certain that Germany would accept. If she accepted, some of the advantages of inviting her to the Conference would disappear if the Conference were to end in failure, and it is unfortunately to be feared that, if Germany were to attend, the Conference would be only too likely to fail, since the probable result would be a Russo-German deadlock.

13. The consequences of a failure of the Conference would in themselves be serious, apart from the German aspect of the matter. The effect of failure to reach agreement on the first occasion when the revision of part of the peace settlement by negotiation has been attempted would be deplorable, and there is little doubt that it would be followed by unilateral action on the part of Turkey in the direction not only of re-militarising the Straits but of fixing new rules of passage, not only for warships but for commercial vessels, entirely at her own discretion and probably in a sense very unfavourable to our naval and commercial interests. It is thus important that the Conference shall if possible result in some agreement.

14. If then the French, Russians and Roumanians maintain their present attitude of trying to insert in the Straits Convention provisions clearly designed to discriminate against Germany, His Majesty's Government may shortly be faced with a choice of evils—either to break off the Montreux Conference or to acquiesce in the Russian proposals at the risk of far-reaching reactions on Germany, and on Anglo-German relations.

15. It is clearly desirable to make every effort to avoid so unpleasant a dilemma and the United Kingdom Delegation are at present endeavouring to secure the acceptance of a compromise. Desirous as they are of facilitating the operation of the Franco-Soviet Pact, both the French and Russians have shown some signs of realising the objections to trying to bind Turkey by the present convention to give effect to pacts to which she is not herself a party. On the basis of this argument the United Kingdom Delegation have proposed an amendment in article 16 of the draft convention by which, in time of war, Turkey, being neutral, would only be obliged to discriminate between belligerents if her own obligations, under the League Covenant *or under a treaty commitment to which she herself was a party*, were involved. It remains to be seen whether the French and Russians can be induced so far to retreat from the position they have taken up as to accept this reasonable compromise. If not, I propose, before asking my colleagues to choose between the alternatives set out in paragraph 14 above, to take action in Paris, with a view to impressing upon M. Blum the grave risks involved in the attitude which the French Government have taken up at Montreux, and of persuading him, if possible, to adopt a policy which will allow the Montreux Conference to be brought to a successful conclusion, thus avoiding, on the one

hand, a set-back to the principle of treaty negotiation by revision, and, on the other, some unfortunate action on the part of a resentful Germany.

ANNEX 1 TO No. 533

Annex A: Article 16 of new Draft Convention (United Kingdom Draft)

En temps de guerre, la Turquie restant neutre, les navires de guerre et les bâtiments auxiliaires jouiront d'une complète liberté de transit et de navigation dans les Détroits dans des conditions identiques à celles qui sont stipulées aux articles 9 à 15.

Ces conditions ne seront toutefois pas applicables à une Puissance belligérante au détriment de ses droits de belligérant.

La Turquie aura toutefois le droit, si elle considère à un moment donné que sa sécurité pourrait être menacée par le passage par les Détroits d'une flotte belligérante, d'interdire le passage de navires appartenant à une Puissance belligérante, à condition que ladite interdiction soit appliquée à toute flotte belligérante sans discrimination.

En temps de guerre, aucune des Puissances riveraines de la mer Noire n'étant belligérante, le passage des Détroits sera interdit à tout bâtiment de guerre appartenant à une Puissance belligérante.

Dans le cas où l'interdiction de passage, prévue aux deux alinéas précédents du présent article, aurait été mise en vigueur, il sera permis à tout bâtiment de guerre appartenant à une Puissance belligérante non riveraine de la mer Noire, et qui se trouverait éventuellement dans ladite mer, de se rendre dans la Méditerranée.

Dans les conditions sus-mentionnées, il sera également permis à tout bâtiment de guerre appartenant à une Puissance riveraine de la mer Noire de rentrer dans cette mer.

Les navires de guerre des belligérants ne procéderont à aucune capture, ils n'exerceront pas le droit de visite et de fouille et ne se livreront à aucun acte hostile dans les Détroits.

En ce qui concerne le ravitaillement et les réparations, les navires de guerre seront soumis aux dispositions de la Convention XIII de La Haye de 1907 relative à la neutralité maritime.

Les droits et devoirs de la Turquie, comme Puissance neutre, ne sauraient l'autoriser à prendre aucune mesure susceptible d'entraver le transit et la navigation dans les Détroits, dont les eaux doivent rester entièrement libres en temps de guerre, la Turquie étant neutre, aussi bien qu'en temps de paix.

ANNEX 2 TO No. 533

Annex B: Article 23 (United Kingdom Draft)

Aucune disposition de la présente convention ne porte atteinte aux droits et obligations découlant du Pacte de la Société des Nations pour la Turquie ou pour toute autre haute partie contractante.

ANNEX 3 TO No. 533

Annex C: Article 16 (Russian Amendment)

Remplacer les 2^{ème}, 3^{ème} et 4^{ème} alinéas par le texte suivant:

‘Toutefois il sera interdit de passer à travers les Détroits aux bâtiments de guerre et navires auxiliaires de tout État belligérant, sauf dans les cas visés à l’article 23.’

ANNEX 4 TO No. 533

Annex D: Article 23 (Russian Amendment)

Les dispositions de la présente convention ne pouvant porter atteinte aux droits et obligations découlant du Pacte de la Société des Nations pour les hautes parties contractantes membres de la Société ou restreindre d’une façon quelconque la mission de celle-ci de sauvegarder efficacement la sécurité des nations, il est entendu que l’effet desdites dispositions et notamment de celles des articles 5 et 9 à 16 ne sera pas de limiter en quoi que ce soit la mise en œuvre éventuelle des mesures prévues par le Pacte à l’égard d’un État agresseur ni d’entraver le passage par les Détroits des bâtiments de guerre en exécution d’engagements d’assistance assumés ou pouvant être assumés à l’avenir par tels États signataires de la présente convention aux termes des accords supplémentaires au Pacte, ainsi que le passage des bâtiments de l’État auquel cette assistance serait due.

No. 534

Foreign Office to Mr. Cuénod (Montreux)

No. 16 Telegraphic [E 4366/26/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 14, 1936, 4.45 p.m.*

From telephone conversation July 13th between Admiral Bellairs and Captain Phillips, I understand that agreement on our part to prohibition in time of peace of passage of aircraft carriers into the Black Sea is not likely to achieve object of inducing Russian Delegation to withdraw their proposal that right of passage of non-Black Sea warships into the Black Sea shall be confined to ‘light surface vessels’. I understand your view to be that it may be necessary to accept Russian proposal.

From purely British naval point of view we could accept it but in view of fact that it aims at exclusion from Black Sea of German pocket battleships its main importance is political.

Discrimination against Germany involved in this particular proposal would be easier to defend than the more important discrimination involved in the Russian amendment of Article 23 concerning pacts supplementary to the Covenant.

While therefore I dislike discrimination against Germany underlying

Russian proposal regarding 'light surface vessels', and consider that it should not be easily accepted, I feel that it may in last resort be accepted provided that the more important question of discrimination on the basis of pacts supplementary to the Covenant is settled in a manner satisfactory to His Majesty's Government, i.e. in a manner which will not leave Germany with valid cause for complaint.

Repeated Saving to Berlin No. 25 and Istanbul No. 3.

No. 535

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 16)

No. 6 Saving: Telegraphic [E 4514/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 15, 1936

At its plenary meeting this morning¹ the Conference began by considering the redraft of certain Articles prepared by the Drafting Committee. These texts are contained in Conference Document No. C.M. 24 enclosed in my despatch No. 33 of July 15th.²

Article 2 of the Draft Convention and the text of Annex I as drawn up by the Drafting Committee were accepted on the withdrawal by the Roumanian Delegation of their previous reservation regarding the levying of sanitary dues.

An article bearing provisionally the number 5(b) was then adopted to regulate the passage of merchant ships in the event of Turkey invoking the provisions of Article 18. Acceptance was however conditioned by a reservation on the part of the Roumanian Delegation regarding the question of whether pilotage in these circumstances should be paid for or not.

The Conference then adopted the text of an Article 9(b) permitting the passage into the Black Sea of submarines constructed or purchased elsewhere and their passage out in order to effect repairs.

The Conference then proceeded to consider an amended text for paragraph (d) of Article 15 prepared by the Technical Committee (Conference document No. C.M. 17(2)—see my despatch No. 31 of July 13th).² The Article was accepted and referred to the Drafting Committee for the preparation of a final text.

Having thus disposed of the questions on which the Technical Committee had been able to reach agreement, consideration was given to Section II of the United Kingdom Draft Convention.

Article 7 was accepted in the form proposed by the Drafting Committee.

Article 8. Discussion was postponed pending a report from the Technical Committee on the text which had been promised by the French and Turkish Delegations.

Article 9. Discussion was adjourned at the suggestion of the United Kingdom Delegation.

¹ A.C.M., pp. 129-41.

² Not printed.

Article 10. The Turkish Delegation proposed a compromise by which the length of the *préavis* should be reduced to eight days both for Black Sea and non-Black Sea Powers, with a rider that it was desirable that non-Black Sea Powers, and especially those far from the Black Sea, should in normal circumstances give longer notice of at least fifteen days. This suggestion was accepted by the Conference and the Article was referred to the Drafting Committee on that basis.

Article 11, paragraph 1. At the request of the Turkish Delegation it was agreed to omit all reference to the size of the Turkish fleet and to limit the tonnage of foreign warships passing through the Straits to 15,000 tons without further qualification. Paragraph 2 was accepted, as were paragraphs 3 and 4 as amended by the Drafting Committee.

The Japanese Delegation had raised the question of special exemption for Japanese training ships, but it was decided that this exemption could best be made by the signature of an additional protocol.

Articles 12 and 13 were accepted.

Article 14. Soviet Delegation desired to exclude submarines from any fleets which might visit Turkish ports in accordance with this article and also to limit their stay to twenty-one days. After some discussion the amendment regarding the exclusion of submarines was withdrawn after the Turkish Delegation had made a formal declaration that they had no intention of inviting submarines on such occasions. As regards the time-limit for such visits, the Turkish Delegation objected to being tied down to any specified number of days, but agreed that such visits should be 'for a limited period'.

No. 536

Mr. Eden to Mr. Cuénod (Montreux)

No. 18 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4460/26/44]

Most Immediate

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 15, 1936, 2 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 46.¹

His Majesty's Government are prepared to agree to the solution of closure

¹ In this telegram of July 15 from Montreux Lord Stanley reported that he had told M. Litvinov that H.M.G. were disposed to yield over the question of escorts (see No. 531, note 2): M. Litvinov had replied that the Soviet Government were most unlikely to agree to any solution other than closure of Straits to both belligerents in time of war, Turkey being neutral, subject to rights and obligations under Covenant of League and possibly of pacts to which Turkey was a party. Thus there was likelihood of a deadlock, with Russians wishing the Straits to be normally closed in time of war (Turkey being neutral) while the British delegation were maintaining in accordance with instructions that they should normally be open to both belligerents unless Turkey decided to close them. He suggested that the result would probably be a breakdown 'consequences of which may well be more unfavourable to us than conditions we could now obtain'. The Cabinet discussed the position on July 15 and agreed that the delegation should be instructed to conclude a treaty on the lines indicated in telegram No. 46. These instructions were conveyed in the present telegram, No. 18 above.

of the Straits to all belligerents in time of war, Turkey being neutral, subject to rights and obligations under the Covenant of the League and under pacts to which Turkey is or may be a party, concluded within the framework of the Covenant of the League and registered and published in accordance with the provisions of Article 18 of the Covenant.

No. 537

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 16, 10.22 a.m.)

No. 47 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4501/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 16, 1936

On receipt of your telegram No. 18¹ of July 15th position was again discussed with French delegation, who repeated that it was only if we could agree to the closure of the Straits to all belligerents in time of war, Turkey being neutral (subject to overriding provision already discussed), that they could themselves agree or hope to bring Roumanians into line over the question of pacts. It was also clear that Russians and Turks were equally insistent on question of closure, and that if we had insisted on principle that Straits should be open to belligerents until they were closed, we should have been unable to obtain any satisfaction of pacts question, and deadlock would have certainly resulted.

2. We accordingly informed French Delegation, that provided that agreement could be reached on text of pacts clause which would be acceptable to us, His Majesty's Government would not further press their insistence on their original draft of Article 16 (C.M. 9).²

3. The best that we could work out as result of consultation with French and Turkish Delegations was the following formula to replace paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of British draft of Article 16 and Monsieur Paul-Boncour promised to use his best endeavours to obtain Roumanian acceptance of it by telephone.

'Toutefois il sera interdit de passer à travers les détroits aux bâtiments de guerre et navires auxiliaires de tout état belligérant sauf dans les cas visés à l'article 23 de la présente convention, ainsi que dans le cas d'assistance prêtée à un état victime d'une agression en vertu d'un pacte d'assistance mutuelle engageant la Turquie, conclu dans le cadre du pacte de la Société des Nations, enregistré et publié conformément aux dispositions de l'article 18 du pacte de la Société des Nations.'

4. At this afternoon's meeting of conference above formula was suggested by the French Delegation in substitution for amendment already put forward on July 8th by Soviet Delegation (C.M. 10).³ While pointing out reasons of principle which have led His Majesty's Government hitherto to press for retention of principle laid down in Lausanne Convention that ordinary rule of international law regarding belligerent rights in cases where Turkey was

¹ No. 536.

² See *A.C.M.*, p. 90.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

neutral should be maintained and emphasising that His Majesty's Government could not in any case have agreed to any provision involving discrimination between belligerents in a way incompatible with international law, I explained that His Majesty's Government were nevertheless prepared to accept French amendment in view of the fact that proposal now put forward would close the Straits equally to both belligerents [except] in cases where Turkey was bound either by the Covenant or by other treaty engagements to which she herself was a party. I made it clear, however, that my acceptance was conditional on no change being introduced into our draft of Article 23 and on general agreement being reached on other articles.

5. This announcement brought about complete change in the situation and Conference then made very rapid progress.

6. Soviet Delegation agreed to abandon its proposals for redraft of Article 23 provided desiderata were met regarding restriction about light surface vessels and escort for large ships passing through the Straits. I indicated that His Majesty's Government would not maintain their opposition on these points provided they were satisfied in regard to Articles 16 and 23.⁴

7. Position therefore is that we have now agreed to Straits being closed to both belligerents in time of war, Turkey being neutral but have succeeded in obtaining redraft of pact article to which no objection could justifiably be taken.

8. Meeting of technical and drafting committees have been arranged for tomorrow morning and there now seems reasonable hope that we may be able to sign new convention on July 18th or 20th.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-6; cf. *D.D.F.*, *op. cit.*, No. 456.

No. 538

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 17, 10.14 a.m.)

No. 48 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4534/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 17, 1936

Following from Lord Stanley.

At plenary meeting this afternoon¹ remaining clauses of convention and preamble were all taken and agreed on.

Redraft of Article 20 which had been produced with great difficulty by Technical Committee earlier in the day² was passed in form entirely acceptable to my Air Adviser (see his report No. 12 of July 16th to Air Ministry).³

Previous agreement had been reached with Turkish Delegation regarding Article 21 on Straits Commission by which Turkish Delegation should propose redraft (prepared by United Kingdom Delegation) providing that Turkish Government should assume all duties and obligations of Straits Commission, which should thus be superseded, and communicate to all

¹ i.e. July 16; *A.C.M.*, pp. 153-67.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 271-2.

³ Not printed.

signatory Powers full particulars of warships passing through the Straits under various provisions of the Convention. Amendment was passed in satisfactory form after some opposition on points of detail from Soviet Delegation and [*sic*] overcome.

Turkish Delegation then, by agreement with United Kingdom Delegation, proposed the omission of Article 22, which had led to considerable controversy. This was agreed to.

Article 23 had already been adopted at yesterday's meeting in form proposed by United Kingdom Delegation.

Article 24 was suppressed as result of discussion in Drafting Committee which had agreed that it was unnecessary in view of both reference in preamble to replacement of Lausanne Convention by present Convention and in view of proposed protocol of signature by which Turkey is to acquire right to remilitarize the Straits.

Article 25 as provisionally agreed upon by Technical Committee was accepted. Main point is that duration is for 20 years, but it will continue automatically unless two years notice of renunciation is given by any one Power, in which case a new conference must be called to negotiate fresh Convention.

Article 25 also states various provisions regarding ratification and entering into force of the Convention—see text by bag.³

Article 26 providing for optional quinquennial revisions of Article containing tonnage figures, etc. led to long argument owing to the fact that Turkish Delegation under Soviet pressure went back on amendment which they had moved in accordance with previous understanding with us providing that in absence of unanimous agreement on any proposed modification of figures, such modification could be adopted by three-quarters majority. Soviet Delegation at first strongly resisted this proposal, and then pressed for attention [*sic*] by Soviet Government of what would have amounted to right of veto. Agreement was eventually reached, however, on complicated formula (text by bag)³ which although leaving right of veto to Turkey meets our main desiderata.

Various formal amendments (one of which had been proposed by Monsieur Titulescu before he left) were adopted in the preamble.

It was decided not to press for insertion in Article 1 of reference to principle of freedom of passage by air, since such freedom, in fact, does not exist.

Discussion was begun on protocol of signature, but in view of certain complicated issues involved and of the fact that this protocol is not so urgent as the rest of the Treaty, was postponed until next plenary meeting.

Drafting Committee will now concentrate on the preparation of final text which it is hoped to send to print tomorrow night. Print version will be scrutinised on Saturday morning and next plenary meeting is to be held on Saturday afternoon for final revision and approval of entire text.

Final touches will be given on Sunday⁴ and text will be printed that evening for signature on Monday.

⁴ i.e. July 19.

Turks appear to be preparing elaborate ceremony of signature, including banquet in evening but we hope to be able to leave that night.

No. 539

Mr. Eden to Mr. Newton (Berlin)

No. 1832 [E 4547/26/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 18, 1936*

Sir,

With reference to my telegram No. 26, Saving,¹ of the 15th July, regarding the possible effect on Germany of the restriction of the right of passage in peace time of non-Black Sea warships into the Black Sea to 'light surface vessels,' I have to inform you that His Majesty's Government subsequently decided to accept a solution of the problem presented by the rights of passage of belligerent warships in time of war when Turkey was neutral, in the sense that such warships should be excluded from the Straits altogether, except when acting under the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations or of a pact supplementary to the Covenant to which Turkey was herself a party. Although this solution left much to be desired from the point of view of His Majesty's Government, who would have preferred that the Straits should have been left open to all belligerent warships except those whom Turkey would have a right or an obligation to exclude in the interests of her own security or as a result of the working of the Covenant, it had at least the merit of excluding the operation of pacts supplementary to the Covenant to which Turkey was not herself a party.

2. It was at the same time realised that this solution, together with the limitation to 'light surface vessels' of the right of passage in peace time, might be the subject of misunderstanding or dissatisfaction in Germany. With a view to preventing any untoward reaction on the part of the German Government, I therefore instructed Sir Robert Craigie to explain to the German Chargé d'Affaires the main developments which had taken place at Montreux since he had been given on the 9th July a copy of the revised version of the Turkish draft convention prepared by the United Kingdom delegation and submitted to the conference on the 4th July.

3. Prince von Bismarck accordingly called at the Foreign Office on the morning of the 16th July. Sir Robert Craigie, who was accompanied by Mr. Sterndale Bennett, began by referring to the reports which Prince von Bismarck would have seen in the press of the discussions which had been going on at Montreux as to whether the new convention should make special provision for the passage through the Straits in time of war, Turkey being neutral, of belligerent warships acting in accordance with certain pacts supplementary to the League Covenant. The United Kingdom draft had

¹ Not printed.

merely contained a general overriding clause about rights and obligations under the League Covenant, and His Majesty's Government would have preferred to have left it at that. They had not thought it right, at all events, that Turkey should be obliged by the new convention to take certain action under pacts to which she herself was not a party. On this point Sir Robert Craigie was glad to be able to say that the view of His Majesty's Government had prevailed. A compromise had been adopted which would refer only to pacts to which Turkey herself was a party. This was a provision to which His Majesty's Government did not think that legitimate objection could be taken.

4. Prince von Bismarck interjected that he did not see very well how Turkey could take the kind of action contemplated under pacts to which she might be a party, without thereby infringing her neutrality. Was not the point in fact so academic as not to need special mention in the convention? Sir Robert Craigie agreed that it might be academic, since the action which Turkey took might in fact result in her becoming belligerent, in which case a different part of the new convention would apply. But this consideration only strengthened the view of His Majesty's Government that the compromise was not one which it was worth while to oppose.

5. Prince von Bismarck said that the reference to pacts to which Turkey was a party seemed to him none the less unfortunate. Did it not in fact open the way for the accession of Turkey to the Franco-Soviet Pact? Sir Robert Craigie replied that while the possibility of Turkey acceding to that pact remained as before, he doubted (though this, of course, was only a personal view) whether the new convention would in itself drive her in that direction. In fact, it might work the other way: Turkey having recovered control of the Straits might be less inclined to become involved in such commitments as the Franco-Soviet Pact.

6. Sir Robert Craigie then went on to explain that it had been decided that the normal rule in time of war, when Turkey was neutral, should be the closure of the Straits to all belligerents, subject only to rights and obligations under the Covenant and under pacts to which Turkey might be a party. His Majesty's Government would themselves have preferred to see the Straits normally open in such circumstances. They realised, however, that once the Straits were remilitarised, Turkey would in fact be in control, and they had not therefore felt that the point possessed such importance as to justify the breakdown of the conference which would certainly have resulted if His Majesty's Government had maintained their attitude. It was fairly certain that if the conference did break down, Turkey would take the matter into her own hands, in which case she would herself decide the conditions on which shipping of all kinds, i.e., commercial vessels as well as warships, was to pass through the Straits. This would probably have resulted in restrictions as little in the interests of Germany as of His Majesty's Government (a point which Prince von Bismarck appeared to appreciate). It was clearly better to obtain the measure of freedom which the new convention would confer on shipping than to run this risk. His Majesty's Government had therefore felt

bound to agree to the general rule that the Straits should normally be closed to warships in time of war when Turkey was neutral.

7. Prince von Bismarck then asked what was the position as regards the limitation of the right of passage to 'light surface vessels.' Was it a fact that this was aimed, as press reports stated, at the German pocket battleships?

8. Sir R. Craigie explained that it was quite true that this definition would exclude the German pocket battleships, but it would also exclude a great many ships belonging to other nations, including Great Britain herself. The real purpose of the definition was to limit the right of passage in time of peace to cruisers. Although the existing convention contained no definite provision on this point, the clause which gave non-Black Sea Powers the right in time of peace to send a force of three ships (each not exceeding 10,000 tons) into the Black Sea seemed to be some evidence that even the framers of the existing convention had cruisers in mind. At all events, the present desire of the Turkish Government was to ensure that in times of tension larger vessels than cruisers should not pass through the Straits. In addition to the Marmora 'yardstick,' which would limit to 15,000 tons the total tonnage of foreign warships which might be in the Straits at any one moment, Turkey now desired a limit on the size and power of individual ships which might pass through the Straits within this global tonnage. The Turks wanted, in fact, to exclude capital ships. Sir R. Craigie then handed to Prince von Bismarck a list of capital ships which would be affected by the definition. This list was the same as that contained in my telegram No. 17¹ of the 15th July to Montreux.

9. Sir R. Craigie also observed that the definition 'light surface vessels' would automatically exclude submarines and aircraft carriers. He trusted, therefore, that the German Government would not believe that they alone were affected. He pointed out, moreover, that if, as His Majesty's Government hoped, the London Naval Treaty of 1936 eventually found general acceptance, the limitation which was now likely to appear in the new Straits Convention would be entirely fair to all. These arguments seemed to make some impression on Prince von Bismarck.

10. Mr. Sterndale Bennett then explained the present position as regards the Marmora 'yardstick' (article 11 of the United Kingdom draft), and the Black Sea 'yardstick' (article 15 of the United Kingdom draft). He said that the general principle of the Marmora 'yardstick' remained unchanged, but it was now probable that there would be a special provision allowing the Russians to send out from the Black Sea units of over 15,000 tons. He explained, in answer to a question, that some derogation from the Marmora 'yardstick' had always been contemplated in favour of the *Paris Commune*,² which he understood to be of 25,000 tons, and it had seemed unreasonable to oppose the Russian request that provision should be made for any ships of similar or even heavier tonnage which she might subsequently build, seeing that Russia was, under the existing convention, completely free of all restrictions on the passage of her warships through the Straits.

² See No. 521, note 5.

11. As regards the Black Sea 'yardstick,' the general principle of the sliding scale appeared to be accepted, although there had been discussions regarding the moment at which the sliding scale should begin to operate. The solution which seemed likely to be accepted was that when the fleet of the strongest Black Sea Power exceeded by 10,000 tons its strength at the time of the signature of the new convention, the global tonnage which non-Black Sea Powers might send into the Black Sea should increase on a ton-for-ton basis from the 30,000-ton minimum up to a maximum of 45,000 tons. Article 15(d) of the United Kingdom draft about the passage of warships into the Black Sea for humanitarian purposes would probably be entirely re-drafted so as to lay down more precisely the procedure to be followed before any Power could send any warship for this purpose over and above the normal global limit; but apart from details of this sort, the only real change in article 15(d) was that the tonnage which any Power might send into the Black Sea in virtue of it would be 8,000 and not 10,000.

12. Prince von Bismarck expressed himself as very appreciative of the information which had been given to him and which he knew that his Government would welcome. He felt sure, however, that they would feel some misgiving about the restriction of the right of passage in peace time to 'light surface vessels.' Although he would pass on the explanation which had been given to him, the fact remained that the press had emphasised that this was directed against the German pocket battleships. It was put to him that it would be unfortunate if his Government were swayed by the interpretations placed on this provision by press correspondents in Montreux. All the Powers concerned were accepting restrictions additional to those placed upon them by the existing convention, and this particular restriction would affect far wider classes of vessels than the German pocket battleships. Prince von Bismarck said that he would certainly represent this to his Government, but he could not help feeling that the restriction had been aimed by Russia against the German pocket battleships.

13. Prince von Bismarck then drew from his pocket a letter which he had received from Herr Dieckhoff. This referred to the explanations which had been given to Prince von Bismarck in London and by yourself in Berlin to Baron von Neurath with a view to dispelling the earlier misapprehensions, as a result of which Baron von Neurath had mentioned the possibility of reactions on the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. The letter asked Prince von Bismarck to inform the Foreign Office that the German Government regarded this particular matter as closed in view of the explanation which had been given. The letter also referred to a remark which Sir R. Craigie had made at the end of a previous interview that the German attitude towards the Anglo-German Naval Agreement appeared to have undergone some change. (Actually Sir R. Craigie had said that the method of inspiring press comments hinting at a modification in the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was a departure from the frank and friendly methods hitherto followed in our Anglo-German naval negotiations.) The letter asked Prince von Bismarck to assure the Foreign Office that this was by no means the case. The German

Government attached the same high importance as before to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and were most anxious to maintain and improve the friendly relations of which that was an example. Sir R. Craigie expressed appreciation of this declaration, which he felt sure that I should welcome.

14. Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Moscow and Constantinople.

I am, &c.,
ANTHONY EDEN

No. 540

Mr. Cuénod (Montreux) to Mr. Eden (Received July 19, noon)

No. 53 Telegraphic: by telephone [E 4560/26/44]

MONTREUX, July 19, 1936

Following from Lord Stanley.

Conference on afternoon of July 18th¹ went through the Convention, proof of which had previously been revised by the drafting Committee, on final reading and agreed on all points.

Japanese Delegation made certain reservations regarding position of Japan in respect of new articles 19 and 25 (old articles 16 and 23) in view of Japan's non-membership of the League. These led to long and difficult discussions, but the matter was eventually settled on basis of record of Japanese reservations being included in *Procès-Verbal*.

Roumanian and Bulgarian Delegates also made statement regarding operation of pact, but although Bulgarian reservation in its original form might have led to great difficulty it was eventually modified (largely at our instance) and statements in their final form are fairly innocuous.

Finally Turkish Representative made declaration in terms previously agreed upon with United Kingdom Delegation (see my immediately following telegram)² regarding maintenance of Treaty of Lausanne, with particular reference to provisions regarding War Graves. This was extremely well received.

Conference then met in public sessions³ and formerly [*sic*] adopted text of Convention. Tributes were paid by all delegations to work of President (to whose firm and skilful management success of Conference is largely due), Vice President, President of Technical Committee and Secretary-General, and Conference closed in most cordial atmosphere.

Final text will be ready for signature tomorrow but Roumanian Delegation asked that signature should be deferred until Tuesday in order to enable M. Titulescu to arrive and sign personally. On great inconvenience of delay being pointed out to them it was eventually arranged that M. Titulescu (who can apparently only travel in his special coach by a somewhat circuitous route) should arrive at 9 tomorrow evening and that signature

¹ *A.C.M.*, pp. 167-75.

² Not printed.

³ *A.C.M.*, p. 175.

should take place at 10 p.m.⁴ As it is not proposed that arrangements for departure of United Kingdom Delegation by the Orient Express that night should be altered, and it is obviously undesirable that we should appear to take up anti-Roumanian attitude we are acquiescing in this arrangement although other Roumanian delegates could equally have signed (since they have the necessary Full Powers) and there has been much adverse comment of impertinence of M. Titulescu's action in thus unnecessarily holding up conclusion of Conference for purely personal reasons.⁵

⁴ See *A.C.M.*, pp. 179-85.

⁵ The *Convention regarding the Régime of the Straits* signed at Montreux on July 20, 1936, is printed in Cmd. 5551, *Treaty Series No. 30* (1937).

APPENDIX I

Cabinet discussion of the British questionnaire to Herr Hitler

(a) *Extract from Cabinet Minutes of April 29, 1936*¹

[C 3301/4/18]

5. Arising out of the discussion on the two preceding items,² the Cabinet entered on a preliminary review of their general policy in the new situation that was developing.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs formulated a number of questions that required consideration. The first set related to the future of the League. Could it survive the failure of sanctions to rescue Abyssinia? If so, could it survive in its present form? Could it ever impose sanctions again? Probably there had never been such a clear-cut case for sanctions. If the League had failed in this case there could probably be no confidence that it could succeed in the future. If the League was to be reformed, should this be linked up with Germany's re-entry? Should it be made clear that we ourselves, after the failure in the case of Italy, did not feel under any obligation to apply sanctions?

The second set of questions related to the Committee of Eighteen appointed to deal with sanctions. Should it remove the present sanctions? The answer appeared to be in the negative. Should it maintain the present sanctions? The answer appeared to be in the affirmative. Should it add to the present economic sanctions, and should it recommend military sanctions? It was unlikely that the Committee would agree to either of the latter proposals. Without suggesting that His Majesty's Government should themselves apply sanctions, he pointed out that so far as the Covenant was concerned, there was nothing to prevent a Power making a demand on Italy and indicating that a refusal would involve certain action.

A further set of questions related to the position of the League on May 11th.³ It would be a humiliating one. The United Kingdom would occupy the Chair. The decisions would turn on our attitude. Two possible alternatives were (i) while maintaining the present sanctions, to make clear that we were not prepared to support Article XVI in the future, and (ii) to put all possible pressure on Italy notwithstanding the risks.

As regards the future of the Council of the League, it must be remembered that it was likely to be a good deal divided. One group of nations would be watching Germany; a second group would be watching Italy. We alone were compelled to watch both. If we decided to cut out Article XVI⁴ would we be surrendering Central Europe to Germany? He thought it improbable that British public

¹ Cabinet Conclusions 31(36).

² The early stages of the Cabinet discussions on this occasion are referred to in No. 277, note 10.

³ When the ninety-second session of the League of Nations Council was due to begin.

⁴ Of the League of Nations Covenant.

opinion would be willing to interfere in Austria, in support of one party which was bolstered up by Mussolini, against another party which was bolstered up by Hitler.

There were minor difficulties, for example, the case of two Maltese, British subjects, imprisoned in Tripoli[,] for whom we could do nothing, and the major question of what Mussolini intended to do with the 400,000 Italian soldiers concentrated in north-east Africa. There had been telegrams to show that the Turkish Ghazi was also apprehensive on the latter score.

Another set of questions related to the German position. Could we secure more cordial relations with Germany? Should our questions to Germany pass through the diplomatic channel or be sent by the hand of a Minister? Were we to go ahead with trying to negotiate a new Locarno Treaty? One of the difficulties was that no two people felt alike on these questions.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs wanted his questionnaire sent to Hitler not later than Monday next.⁵ Finally, while recognising that this brought him on to rather controversial ground, he wanted the Cabinet to consider whether there was a possibility of a *détente* between this country and Germany.

The Prime Minister, notwithstanding his general point of view which he had stated in public in favour of using the diplomatic channel rather than sending Ministers to conduct negotiations abroad, inclined to the view that there would be advantages in sending the questions to the German Government by the hands of a Minister, for the reason that the ordinary diplomatic channels hardly seemed to function in dealing with dictators.

The Home Secretary,⁶ as a former Foreign Secretary, agreed in this view. He thought Herr Hitler was susceptible to the personal touch.

Some other members of the Cabinet took a different view. They pointed out the effect of sending Ministers on these missions was to lower the prestige of the Diplomatic Service as a whole, and to weaken the position of the particular Ambassador concerned. It was rare that good results had followed the visits of Ministers. Moreover, the visit of a Minister to Berlin would encourage the Germans as to our attitude and re-awaken French suspicions and lack of confidence that was so important a feature in the present situation.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that a Minister can only go on such a mission once, and the question arose as to whether a Minister should take the questions with him or whether the questions should be sent first and possibly followed by a visit by a Minister.

Several members of the Cabinet pointed out that the general policy ought to be settled before the means by which it was to be carried out were discussed. Our principal aim, it was suggested, at the present time was to play for time and for peace. There was some reason to suppose that Germany did not wish to make war on us *now*. Time was vital for the completion of our defensive security. The state of public opinion was such that the country would not be willing to honour any commitments unless these were vital to our security, which meant those of the Locarno type. There was every advantage, therefore, it was suggested, in coming to terms with Hitler and fastening him down to keep the peace in the west. Did it matter if the French said they could not rely on us? How far could we rely on the French—in which connexion reference was made to what had been said earlier in the meeting about their attitude on the Djibouti railway. In the long run French interests were bound up with our own, so our line should be to try and obtain a

⁵ May 4. Cf. No. 307.

⁶ Sir J. Simon.

détente with Germany. This would be to follow for once a line that public opinion could support.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence⁷ said that the course of the discussion impelled him to raise a matter that had lately been prominent in his mind. He had been feeling the urgency and difficulty of the re-equipment programme and had been considering how far the assumption of 'peace conditions' on which our present preparations were based, was compatible with the growing anxieties of the international situation. In this connexion he referred to the possibility mentioned by the First Lord of the Admiralty⁸ that if the Fleet was to be kept much longer at concert pitch in the Mediterranean, some measures of mobilization might be necessary. He quoted a warning of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the last paragraph of his covering note to the enclosures in C.P. 121(36)⁹ that it was 'more than ever necessary to do all we can to increase the *tempo* of our own re-equipment'. He did not ask for a decision that day, but he warned the Cabinet that he might have to ask for authority to adopt more drastic measures such, for example, as would enable manufacturers to give priority to Government orders in connexion with the Defence requirements programmes, and to postpone commercial orders whether for home or foreign account.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer,¹⁰ after recalling his own reply to some observations by Mr. Winston Churchill in the House of Commons on this subject,¹¹ asked that the Minister for Defence Co-ordination's question should be reserved until after decisions had been reached on the major policy of the Government. Meanwhile, it would be useful if the Minister could inquire how far measures such as he had suggested would in fact increase the *tempo* of our defensive preparations.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence said that he had already begun some inquiries on this aspect of the question.

The Cabinet agreed:

(a) That a Cabinet Committee composed as follows:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair),
The Lord President of the Council,
The Chancellor of the Exchequer,
The Lord Chancellor,
The Secretary of State for Home Affairs,
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,
The Lord Privy Seal,
The Minister for Defence Co-ordination,

should consider and report to the Cabinet on the foreign policy to be adopted by the Government in the present international situation.

(b) That the question of whether some departure should be made from the decision to aim at securing our Service needs without interference with or reduction of production for civil and export trade (Defence Requirements Report, paragraph 36, C.P. 26(36))¹² should be reserved until after the Cabinet had taken its major decisions on foreign policy.

⁷ Sir T. Inskip.

⁸ Viscount Monsell.

⁹ No. 272.

¹⁰ Mr. N. Chamberlain.

¹¹ Cf. 311 *H.C. Deb.* 5 s., cols. 334-9 and 433-5.

¹² Not printed.

(b) *Extract from Cabinet Minutes of April 30, 1936¹*

[C 3300/4/18]

3. The Cabinet had before them once more a memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (C.P. 123(36))² containing a draft of a series of questions to be addressed to the German Government.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the difficulty in drafting the questions had been not to give offence to the Germans and not to encourage them to make fresh claims. The paragraph relating to colonies, for example, had been re-drafted several times so as to avoid inviting the Germans to raise their maximum demands.

The Cabinet then discussed the questions set forth in paragraphs 5 to 13 of the draft despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin contained in the enclosure to C.P. 123(36).

Paragraph 5 (Whether Germany possesses 'complete equality'). After the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had answered certain questions, the Cabinet agreed:

(a) To approve paragraph 5.

Paragraph 6 (The German View of the Maintenance of the remaining operative Clauses of the Treaty of Versailles). The reference in line 5 to the recent Anglo-German Naval Agreement was criticised on the ground that it would be a mistake to draw the attention of the German Government to the fact that the Naval Agreement had its origin in the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. It was suggested that even though historically correct politically it was hardly true. As our desire was to try and clarify certain points in the German memorandum in order to prepare the way for a negotiation, it was desirable to make it as easy as possible for the Germans, consistently with the views of the other Governments concerned.

While there was general agreement that we should make clear that we did not accept the German Government's historical interpretation of events connected with the Treaty of Versailles, as set forth in paragraph 6 of the German Government's memorandum of the 31st March, it was felt to be unnecessary and inadvisable to include the separate memorandum on the historical argument set forth in the annex to C.P. 123(36).

The Cabinet agreed:

(b) To approve paragraph 6, subject to the following alterations:

- (i) the omission from lines 5 and 6 of the words 'such as the recent Anglo-German Naval Agreement[']; and
- (ii) the deletion of the last sentence 'Their views are embodied in a separate memorandum (see Annex)' as well as of the Annex.

Paragraphs 7 and 8. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the point of these paragraphs was to ascertain whether the German Government claimed to speak not only for the people of Germany itself but also for Germans outside the Fatherland.

Considerable discussion took place on these two paragraphs.

The general line of criticism was that the paragraphs, as at present drafted, were somewhat provocative and might lead the Germans to give a reply which would increase our difficulties in bringing about the desired negotiation. For example, the effect of the German reply might produce a rejoinder from the French

¹ Cabinet Conclusions 32(36).

² No. 277.

Government which would check negotiations. Paragraph 7 in particular was criticised as being of rather a pin-pricking character.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that this was a matter in which France and all Europe was greatly interested and, without some clearing up of the German position, it would be very difficult to make progress with the proposed negotiation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer suggested that the paragraphs might be drafted rather less categorically and the question might be stated in such a way as to bring out the fact that the Germans were not menacing in the West. For example, it might be said that Germany had given a satisfactory statement of their attitude towards Western Europe, but that in Eastern Europe their attitude was not so clearly stated. They might be asked if they could give a clearer assurance about Denmark, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Soviet Russia, The Baltic States, Memel and Danzig and Austria that they had no aggressive intentions. In fact, the question should be stated in such a way as to enable us to satisfy the French Government that we had put the question to Germany without causing friction with the German Government.

In this connection, the Cabinet were reminded that Germany had offered a non-aggression pact to the limitrophe States.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer added that he particularly disliked the last sentence of paragraph 7 which gave the impression that while we *thought* the Germans meant one thing, we *assumed* for politeness' sake that they meant the other.

In the course of the discussion on these paragraphs, it was pointed out that drafting of the paragraph turned to some extent on our general policy. The Secretary of State for War³ took the opportunity to express his disagreement with an idea which had been ventilated on the previous day that we ought to reach agreement with Germany even if it could not endure very long in order to gain time. He agreed that this would be popular, but it would mean that we should have to stand by while Germany violated Treaties and built up a vast Empire in Europe with a view to eventually becoming a sea-power and dominating the world. France and Belgium alone could not resist Germany. From a shorter point of view, he disliked the idea. It might well drive the French to strike at Germany now—a course which appeared to be favoured in certain quarters in Paris. In spite of their confidence, he thought the French would probably get the worst of it and the Germans would then attack France and Belgium. Could we stand by and see France and Belgium beaten? He would do everything possible to hold on to the nations that wanted peace, all of which it so happened were members of the League of Nations. In this way, it might be possible to show the Germans that they could not accomplish their aims.

This point, however, was not followed up and the Cabinet turned again to paragraphs 7 and 8.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (c) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should redraft paragraphs 7 and 8 in the light of the discussion.

Paragraph 9 (The Air Pact). This paragraph was approved without discussion.

Paragraph 10 (Non-aggression Pacts in relation to the League of Nations). The Cabinet agreed:

³ Mr. A. Duff Cooper.

To approve paragraph 10, subject to the following:

- (d) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should consider further the inclusion of the penultimate paragraph beginning 'There are two further points' as, if included, its drafting might be affected by the re-drafting of paragraphs 7 and 8.
- (e) That the last sentence in paragraph 10 should be omitted, namely, 'His Majesty's Government assume that this is still the view of the German Government.'

Paragraph 11 (Colonies). Doubts were expressed as to the desirability of including any reference to the German desire for Colonies.

The main argument for referring to the matter was that the Germans were known to attach importance to it and the Press in England had been full of suggestions that the subject would be dealt with among the questions. Nearly every other point in the German memorandum had been referred to and to neglect this issue would, therefore, be the more marked.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that the German Government had not raised the question explicitly but had merely expressed an expectation that within a reasonable time after Germany's return to the League of Nations, the question would be cleared up. The draft despatch under consideration had as its object the clearing up of certain questions with a view to a negotiation and the colonial question did not, therefore, arise at the present stage. To mention the matter explicitly might lead to a most embarrassing reply from Germany. Moreover, to do so was hardly consistent with the undertaking given by the Prime Minister at the House of Commons that we would not raise the question.⁴

The wording of the paragraph was criticised on the ground that it gave the impression that the German reply was likely to lead to a clarification of their attitude on colonies which might assist in the solution of the question, which was not really the case. Something might be said for a statement that we were willing to treat or that we were not willing to treat on the question of colonies, but it was inadvisable to mention it in this vague fashion.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (f) That the question of colonies should not be referred to explicitly, but in a general manner in some such formula as the following:

'There are other matters to be raised later but it is unnecessary to refer to them in this despatch, the object of which is to elucidate certain questions with a view to arranging for a negotiation on the general proposals.'

Paragraph 12 (The proposed separation of the Covenant from the Treaty of Versailles). Questions were asked as to whether it was necessary to refer to this question but objections were not presented.

It was pointed out, however, that in the German memorandum, this question was linked with that of German colonies and that this should be borne in mind in the drafting of the paragraph.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (g) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, while having authority to include paragraph 12 if he thought it necessary, should consider it in connection with paragraph 11, namely, the point referred to just above.

⁴ See No. 286, note 2.

Paragraph 13 was approved.

Annex.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (h) To delete the Annex as mentioned in Conclusion (b)(ii) above.

General. The despatch was then discussed as a whole from the point of view of whether it was calculated to carry out the policy which the Cabinet had in mind, namely, to lead to a negotiation with a view to clearing up the European situation. It was recognised that on the one hand it was important to satisfy the French that we had asked full explanations on all essential points; and on the other hand that this must be accomplished without stimulating the Germans to include some bitter passage that would render further progress towards negotiation impossible. The document, it was suggested, should be as unsensational as possible in order to bring down the international temperature. The impression it should give should be that we were most anxious to reach a bargain with Germany but as a preliminary step we want to clear up their attitude on certain points. The document also must satisfy our own public, but it was suggested that our countrymen probably realised by this time that one of the objects of the questions was to gain time for the French during the elections and would read it with that background.

The Cabinet were reminded that the drafting would vary considerably according as [*sic*] whether we desired that in the event of an unfavourable reply on certain points the negotiation should be closed down or that even an unfavourable response should not end the negotiation.

A suggestion that met with general approval was that the despatch should be introduced by a new paragraph in which without emphasising our desire for good relations with Germany so strongly as to rouse French suspicions, we should demonstrate our warm desire for peace and the immense contribution to that end which it was within the power of nations to make.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (i) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should re-draft the despatch in the light of the discussion.

Further Meeting of the Cabinet. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the Prime Minister that Europe in general and the French Government in particular were anxiously waiting the despatch of these questions and he would like to send them to Berlin as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister thought that in a matter of this supreme importance the Cabinet ought not to be rushed and that a further meeting should be held early in the following week. In this he was supported by many of his colleagues.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (j) That a meeting should be held on Monday, the 4th May, at 11.30 a.m. to consider a re-draft of the despatch to be circulated by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
- (k) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should see the French Ambassador and explain the reasons for the delay.

(The Lord President of the Council⁵ left at this point. The President of the Board of Education⁶ had left earlier in the discussion of this item.)

⁵ Mr. R. MacDonald.

⁶ Mr. O. Stanley.

APPENDIX II

Cabinet Discussion of Plans for an Agreement with Germany

Extract from Cabinet Minutes of July 6, 1936¹

[C 4975/4/18]

2. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported that the recent Meetings of the Council and Assembly at Geneva² had been the most exacting and the most depressing which he had attended. The agenda had been two-fold. First, the liquidation of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, which had been accomplished. The task of the United Kingdom Delegation had not been made any easier owing to the speech of the South African Representative, which had been rather too strong for the occasion and stronger than had appeared in the British Press. M. van Zeeland had proved to be a particularly good President of the Assembly, and his last speech had done something to restore confidence. The second question had been the Danzig incident, which had created much pessimism at Geneva.

He himself felt that the international situation was so serious that from day to day there was the risk of some dangerous incident arising, and even an outbreak of war could not be excluded. The reasons for this view were as follows:

- (1) The weakness of the League of Nations.
- (2) The weakness of France, which was generally recognised at Geneva.
As examples of this he gave a statement made to him by the well-informed Portuguese Foreign Minister, that everyone knew that France did not count for much in Europe now: and the apprehensions of His Majesty's Ambassador in Paris as to the future in France.
- (3) The fact that armaments were growing stronger every week in Germany, which was governed by unscrupulous people. Evidence of their attitude was furnished by the speech of Herr Greiser, the President of the Danzig Senate, whose remarks on the Danzig question had been even more aggressive in manner than in substance, and who had given the impression of a bully who felt stronger than he had been on the last occasion and expected to be stronger still on the next.
- (4) The present poverty of Poland was another factor. Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, had adopted a stronger attitude after Herr Greiser's second speech and had made clear that he would not give up Danzig and that Poland was prepared, if there were a movement against the League High Commissioner, to support him by force.
- (5) The weakness of some of the important lesser Powers, especially Spain.
- (6) The weakness of our own armaments and the doubts that existed on our foreign policy.
- (7) Our anxieties in the Far East.

In view of the above he could give no guarantee of the certainty of peace even

¹ Cabinet Conclusions 50(36). Cf. No. 418, note 2.

² Cf. No. 395, notes 2 and 4.

during the present year. It was not that anyone, even Herr Hitler, was, so far as he knew, projecting warlike operations, but that the various nations were in such a ferment that some episode might precipitate danger.

The position was so serious that he thought the Cabinet ought to consider two proposals.

- (1) That the Prime Minister should see the heads of the Press and tell them that the next few months might be decisive, and impress on them their responsibility for taking no action which might make matters worse (e.g., comparable to the attitude of certain Press proprietors, which had contributed to the likelihood of the Italian attack on Abyssinia).
- (2) That the Prime Minister should see the Leaders of the Opposition and communicate to them the facts of the situation.

Coming to our own policy, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs promised to circulate a Memorandum by the Foreign Office within the next few days. The alternatives were as follows:

- (1) To work for a new Locarno Treaty and at the same time to declare a situation in which Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant would disappear.

The advantage of this course was that by these means alone was it possible to achieve universality for the League of Nations. As the result of his talks at Geneva, however, he was clear that this plan would not be accepted by the French, Belgians and Little Entente, and consequently that it would smash the League.

- (2) To go back to the policy of the Geneva Protocol.

This policy had the support of Mr. Winston Churchill, and probably of the Labour Opposition Party, but he himself did not think that the country would back it.

Consequently it appeared necessary to choose between the first course, which involved smashing the League, and something on the lines of the French proposal in favour of a series of regional obligations combined with economic sanctions to be imposed on an aggressor by the States that were not members of that particular regional arrangement.

As to the proposed Brussels meeting, the idea was that M. van Zeeland and the United Kingdom Government should press for Germany to be invited to be represented at a meeting to work out a new Locarno and to bring Germany back to the League. The object was to get Germany into conference, relinquishing the British questionnaire and asking them to come practically without conditions. If this was not done there was the risk that after the Olympic Games the Powers would get further demands from Germany. By holding the meeting they would to some extent keep the initiative. There was some doubt as to whether, at the Brussels meeting, the French Government would be in a position to agree to a meeting with the Germans without conditions. They might be under a good deal of pressure from the Russian Soviet Government in a contrary sense. Nevertheless they might be induced to agree. M. Blum had not been at Geneva for very long, and the only understanding he had reached with him and M. Delbos was that they clearly understood that the object of the meeting was not to establish (*constater*) that Germany had not replied to the questionnaire and that therefore negotiations had broken down. M. van Zeeland thought that M. Blum would come some way to meet us.

In reply to a question as to what M. van Zeeland had meant by the phrase

'Placing Germany on the defensive' (Geneva Telegram No. 89),³ The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs explained that the Belgian Prime Minister's object had been to get the initiative into our own hands.

In the course of the discussion, reference was made to the likelihood that, in the event of a meeting taking place, Herr Hitler would raise the whole question of the Treaty of Versailles, including German colonies. In that event, it was suggested it would be no use trying to push the subject in the background. One proposal was that the safest course would be [to] fall back on the line of helping Germany in the matter of raw materials, but the comment was offered that this would not assist Germany to whom colonies were a matter of *amour propre*. Another suggestion was that we should make perfectly clear that we could not surrender the colonies. No information was available as to the attitude of France who was responsible for the greater part of the mandated territories not under the Dominions, but it was thought that in order to obtain a settlement, France might be willing to make some concession. Yet another suggestion was that it would be best to forestall the German demands by making in advance a statement of our attitude on the question. The Cabinet were informed that the feeling in East Africa was extremely strong on this subject.

The view was expressed that, in anticipation of a possible acceptance of an invitation to a conference by Herr Hitler, the Government ought to make its mind up clearly on the following three questions:

- (1) The future of the League of Nations.
- (2) Our Policy in Eastern Europe.
- (3) The German colonies.

Any conference with Germany was certain to be faced with demands on these three points.

The First Commissioner of Works,⁴ who had been present at some of the conversations at Geneva and had been in touch with the situation, urged that if we were to come to terms with Germany, action should be taken soon. There was much doubt as to whether M. Blum's Government would last. It was possible that by the Autumn the situation in France might be very grave. A number of firms were reported to be likely to close down owing to the difficulty of selling their products when paying the larger wages. Moreover, the economic repercussions of the Abyssinian expedition would soon be telling heavily upon Italy. If these things were to happen, it would be difficult to form a combination and, in any event, the problems would not be made less serious from delay. He urged that the sooner we came to grips with Germany the better, as at the moment Germany did not appear completely to appreciate her own strength and the relative weakness of others.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported that he had seen His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin that morning at the Foreign Office. Sir Eric Phipps thought that it might be possible to get Germany to enter into a new Locarno Treaty, but it would be at the expense of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, as Herr Hitler would never commit himself as regards Eastern Europe. We should then be placed in the same kind of moral dilemma in which M. Laval had found himself when confronted with his obligations under the Covenant in Africa after he had done a deal with Italy in Europe. If we tried to get the German Chancellor to

³ No. 393.

⁴ Lord Stanhope.

commit himself to a settlement for Europe as a whole Herr Hitler would be sure to refuse.

The First Commissioner of Works reported that there were signs that France was rather more doubtful about her alliances with Eastern European States and some people were sceptical as to whether they could rely on any help at all from Russia.

The question was raised as to what time-table M. van Zeeland had in mind for his programme. Was it the idea for the Locarno Powers other than Germany to meet during July and then to send an invitation to Germany to join them at Brussels or alternatively that the Powers other than Germany should first clear their minds on the larger questions with a view to an agreed policy before meeting Germany? The arguments on either side were quite obvious.

Some mistrust was expressed of the plan of getting the Locarno Powers other than Germany to meet with a view to inviting Germany to a new conference on the ground that Germany was certain to regard it as a *bloc* of the four Powers with a view to agreement not only in the West but also in East of Europe. This would be regarded as the re-creation of the policy of the encirclement of Germany. In this connection, attention was drawn to Mr. Newton's telegram No. 207^s from Berlin of the 4th July in which he expressed the view that 'The prospects of useful German collaboration would, no doubt, be greatly enhanced if it were possible to extend the invitation to attend the next Locarno Conference *ab initio* and not merely as a sequel to a preliminary conference without Germany'. This seemed to indicate that as likely as not Germany would not accept under such conditions.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out the difficulties of inviting Germany to the first conference after Herr Hitler had torn up the Locarno Treaty and neglected to answer our questionnaire. It would also be very difficult for the French with their commitments to states in Eastern Europe. It was suggested that to make the attempt through diplomatic channels would involve most difficult discussions with France and Belgium and lead to delay.

As regards the dilemma in which we were placed in consequence of our possible commitments in Eastern Europe under the Covenant, it was pointed out that our defensive arrangements were in such a condition that we could not face war in Europe this year and that public opinion would never support the Government in such a policy. In these circumstances, the proper course appeared to be to clear up first the Mediterranean situation and then the Western European situation. If France was given an assurance of support if attacked, it might deter her from a forward policy. In other words, circumstances compelled us to abandon the complete League policy in order to secure half the policy.

The question was raised as to whether if forcible action was taken by Germany over the Danzig question, that would not bring the Poles and Russians together in conditions where Russia would be able to use her powerful Air Force.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the Poles might compromise with Germany and ask for a withdrawal of the High Commissioner. This meant more humiliation for the League of Nations which might be driven from one humiliation to another with repercussions on the position of the Government here.

In the course of the discussion a distinction was drawn between a meeting at Brussels for the purpose of concerting policy and a meeting merely to agree on an invitation to Germany. It was suggested that the meeting might be [?confined] to the second purpose and might be quite short. The Secretary of State for Foreign

^s No. 408.

Affairs said that Sir Eric Phipps was in favour of the proposals made but rather doubted if the French Government could agree to invite Germany unconditionally. He thought it possible that Herr Hitler might accept but his only object would be to free his hands elsewhere than in Western Europe.

The view was expressed that to continue drifting was to play Germany's game. Herr Hitler would see France going to pieces and the United Kingdom taking no definite line while Germany became stronger. That was urged as the reason for the Brussels Conference which would also have the effect of making clear the sincerity of our endeavours to come to an agreement on the future organisation of Europe and of removing all ambiguity as to Germany's intentions. At present Germany was sitting back, refusing to answer questions put to her and not appointing an Ambassador in London, while events were drifting towards some possible episode at Danzig. If an invitation was sent it would be difficult for Herr Hitler to refuse. The main question of difficulty at the moment therefore, was as to whether the Locarno Powers, other than Germany, should meet first or whether Germany should be asked straight away.

Members of the Cabinet were impressed by the gravity of the situation in Europe as depicted by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs which rendered it necessary that the Government should make up its mind on the essential problems already enumerated. The objects of British policy, it was pointed out, were first to secure peace in the world if possible and second to keep this country out of war. If Germany was seeking a hegemony in Europe she would not want to fight the whole of Europe at once. If we had been strong enough and public opinion had been better instructed it might have been possible for us to guarantee peace in Europe both east and west. At present, however, our defensive arrangements were inadequate and public opinion would not support a policy of this kind. Consequently it was suggested our policy ought to be framed on the basis that we could not help Eastern Europe. We ought, however, to resist by force any attempt against our own Empire or Flanders. If these were our basis, it was suggested that our policy towards the future of the League ought to be somewhat on French lines: that is to say of regional pacts. We ought also, it was suggested, to try and warn Germany against violence and especially the kind of violence that would bring us into action. If we met the Locarno Powers the object of the meeting ought, it was suggested, to be to discuss a future Locarno Treaty and Germany's March proposals. We should not exclude the Colonial question from the agenda, but if Germany raised it we should make it quite clear that we would give up nothing. If Germany refused to attend a meeting then we should form a Western Locarno Treaty with France and Belgium on the lines that if Germany attacked them we should come to their aid and if Germany attacked us they should do the same.

(The Secretary of State for the Colonies left at this point.)

The comment on the above proposal was that while the Government should make up its own mind to reduce its commitments in Eastern Europe we should not announce that we were unwilling or unable to help in Eastern Europe. Two stages had to be considered. First, contingencies for which we would accept definite commitments: and, second, contingencies for which we would not accept definite commitments, but which would be left sufficiently vague to enable us to keep our hands free.

It was suggested that this meant getting rid of the automatic sanction provided by Article 16 of the Covenant.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that the difficulty of this course was that if an obligation to fight in support of the Covenant was ruled out everyone would assume that we would not fight. Another view was that the general assumption might be just the contrary.

There was general agreement that a Meeting of the Locarno Powers (other than Germany) at Brussels should be held solely for the purpose of sending an invitation to Germany and bringing Germany into the League of Nations.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs thought it possible that with M. van Zeeland's help France might be convinced.

The Prime Minister asked what kind of communication there would be with Germany pending the Brussels Meeting? He pointed out that the main difficulty was in persuading the French.

One suggestion was that the approach to France should be through M. van Zeeland, but an alternative suggestion was that we should also try to persuade the French Government.

The view was strongly emphasised that the Powers other than Germany must now discuss among themselves the line they were to take towards Germany at the Brussels Conference. Before they did this the Germans must be on the scene.

The suggestion was made that the present policy of yielding to Germany on every occasion merely encouraged Herr Hitler to pursue his aggressive policy, and the question was raised as to whether Herr Hitler ought not to be told that there was a definite limit beyond which we could not allow him to go. Otherwise every surrender would bring us nearer to war. It was pointed out, however, that at the moment the country had neither the means nor the heart to stop him.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs proposed that we should inform the Belgian Government that His Majesty's Government were prepared to accept his [*sic*] invitation to the proposed Conference at Brussels, on the understanding that the object was to agree on an invitation to Germany to take part in a Conference with a view to a new Locarno Treaty and bringing Germany back into the League of Nations; and that M. van Zeeland should be asked whether the French understood clearly that that was the basis of the proposed Conference at Brussels.

Towards the end of the discussion the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs read out a telegram he had just received from Brussels⁶ proposing that the Meeting should be held on July 22nd.

The Cabinet agreed:

- (a) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should send a telegram to Brussels⁷ accepting the proposal that a meeting of the Locarno Powers (other than Germany) should be held in Brussels on July 22nd:
- (b) That the Belgian Prime Minister should be asked to satisfy himself that the French Government were in agreement that the object of the proposed Conference was to draw up an invitation to Germany to attend a further Conference of the Locarno Powers with a view to a new Locarno Treaty and securing the return of Germany to the League of Nations:
- (c) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should report the latest developments at the Meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday, July 9th.

⁶ No. 412.

⁷ See No. 418.

APPENDIX III

Report of the Plymouth Committee on the transfer of a Colonial Mandate or Mandates to Germany

C.M.G. 6r¹ [C 4275/97/18]

June 9, 1936

COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

By direction of the Prime Minister a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, composed as follows, was set up on the 9th March, 1936, to consider in all its aspects the question of the possible transfer of a Colonial Mandate or Mandates to Germany:

The Right Hon. the Earl of Plymouth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. W. Baxter, M.C., First Secretary, Foreign Office

Mr. R. A. Wiseman, Assistant Secretary, Dominions Office

Sir Cecil Bottomley, K.C.M.G., C.B., O.B.E., Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office

Mr. G. L. M. Clauson, C.M.G., O.B.E., Assistant Secretary, Colonial Office

Colonel R. B. Pargiter, General Staff, War Office

Captain E. N. Syfret, R.N., Deputy Director of Plans, Admiralty

Mr. S. H. Phillips, Principal Assistant Secretary, Admiralty

Wing Commander L. G. S. Payne, M.C., A.F.C., Air Staff, Air Ministry

Mr. A. E. Overton, C.M.G., M.C., Assistant Secretary, Board of Trade

Major V. Dykes, M.B.E., R.E., Assistant Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence	} (<i>Joint Secretaries</i>)
Mr. C. G. Eastwood, Colonial Office	

The following also attended some or all of the meetings of the Sub-Committee:

Mr. J. A. N. Barlow, C.B., C.B.E., Under-Secretary, Treasury

Mr. F. T. A. Ashton-Gwatkin, C.M.G., Counsellor, Foreign Office

Mr. B. Cockram, Dominions Office

Mr. S. Caine, Colonial Office

Lieut.-Colonel O. W. H. Leese, D.S.O., General Staff, War Office

Squadron Leader D. L. Blackford, Air Staff, Air Ministry

Part I. Introduction

1. We have been appointed 'to consider in all its aspects the question of the possible transfer of a colonial mandate or mandates to Germany.'

2. We presume that the matter is to be examined in the light of the passage of the German Government's Memorandum of the 7th March, 1936,² in which they express the expectation that, in the course of a reasonable period after their proposed re-entry into the League of Nations 'the question of colonial equality

¹ Also described as C.I.D. Paper No. 1236-B.

² See No. 42, Enclosure.

of rights . . . may be clarified through friendly negotiations'—a suggestion repeated in paragraph 22 (18) of the German Note of the 31st March, 1936.³

3. In order to cover all possible contingencies, we have taken into account the possibility that the transfer of mandates might be accompanied or followed by an alteration in the status of the territories themselves from that of mandated territories to ordinary colonies.

Part II. Descriptive and Historical

(A) DESCRIPTION OF THE FORMER GERMAN COLONIES

4. Apart from the leased territories of Kiaochow which have since been returned to China, the whole of the former German colonial empire was in Africa or the Western Pacific. The following is a list of the territories composing it, showing also the present holders of the mandates⁴:

Africa (vide Map attached⁵)

German East Africa: Tanganyika is held by the United Kingdom, and the Provinces of Ruanda and Urundi by Belgium, under 'B' mandate; a small area was returned to Portugal in full sovereignty.

German South-West Africa: 'C' mandate held by the Union of South Africa. Togoland and the Cameroons: The larger part of each of these territories is held by France, the smaller by the United Kingdom, under 'B' mandate. Some 100,000 square miles of the Cameroons were returned to France in full sovereignty.

The Pacific

German New Guinea and the Solomon Islands: 'C' mandate held by Australia.

The German Samoan Islands: 'C' mandate held by New Zealand.

The Island of Nauru: 'C' mandate held jointly by the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, and at present administered by Australia.

The Marshall Caroline and Ladrone Islands: 'C' mandate held by Japan.

5. British Togoland and the northern part of British Cameroons are narrow strips of territory inland which were handed over to Great Britain in order to effect certain boundary adjustments and thus create homogeneous tribal areas. Their transfer to Germany would be useless unless the neighbouring French territory were also transferred. For practical purposes therefore the direct United Kingdom interest is limited to Tanganyika and the small southern part of the British Cameroons.

6. With the exception of part of South-West Africa all the former German colonies are in the tropics. Their total area, about 1 million square miles, is nearly six times that of Germany: the population, 14 million, is about one-fifth that of Germany. Ruanda-Urundi and some districts of Tanganyika and the Cameroons are thickly populated; the rest, particularly South-West Africa, is sparsely populated. Nevertheless, except for parts of South-West Africa and small parts of Tanganyika, there is no land suitable for permanent settlement by Europeans. The climate of the remainder, with the exception perhaps of some

³ See No. 193, note 2.

⁴ *Note in original*: For the difference between 'B' and 'C' mandates, see paragraph 16.

⁵ Not printed.

of the Pacific Islands, is such that Europeans cannot make their permanent home there.

7. The white population before the war was under 25,000 of whom nearly 15,000 were in South-West Africa. The white population to-day is about 49,000, of whom nearly 32,000 are in South-West Africa, and rather under 10,000 in Tanganyika. Of the 49,000, probably some 11,000 are German-born, of whom 2,665 are in Tanganyika and the remainder mostly in South-West Africa. Many of the latter have been induced to take British nationality.

8. The broad outlines of the economy of each territory are the same. They are in an early stage of development and the native is still mainly dependent for his subsistence upon what he grows himself and not upon what he buys. Before the European occupation, a money economy hardly existed at all, and even to-day, though the natives require money to purchase certain articles of foreign manufacture to the use of which they have become accustomed, their main need for cash is to enable them to pay their taxes. Money is an additional element of life, but not essential to it.

9. The nature of the economic structure is important in considering the possibilities of increasing the productivity of these territories. In a civilized country there is a fair presumption that the people, if they find an expanding market for their products, will increase their production so as to increase their incomes. The same presumption does not hold good in these territories. Most natives have little desire for an increased money income *per se*; they will only increase their production in two circumstances, (a) if prices fall and it is therefore necessary to produce more in order to maintain their money income at the level to which they are accustomed, and (b) if they can see an immediate reward for their labours in the acquisition of additional quantities of the goods they happen to like.

10. The main products of the territories are agricultural, the most important crops being food-stuffs for local consumption. The chief agricultural exports are sisal, animal products, cotton, cocoa, coffee, copra and palm products. Mineral resources are practically confined to diamonds, vanadium and some copper in South-West Africa; gold in Tanganyika and New Guinea; and phosphates in Nauru and one of the Caroline Islands under Japanese mandate. There are, however, certain areas, e.g., in New Guinea, the mineral resources of which are still almost entirely unexplored. There is virtually no industrial development in any of the ex-German Territories.

11. We give in Appendix I⁶ more detailed facts about the different territories. The following Table [on page 761] gives in statistical form a picture of the position.

(B) HISTORY

(i) *Pre-War*

12. The history of German colonial aspirations has been recently set out in full in a Memorandum by the Foreign Office (F.O. Paper C 2595/21/18).⁷ Germany was a late comer in the colonial field, for the bulk of her empire was only acquired between 1884 and 1886. In 1899 she obtained some of the Pacific Islands, and in 1911, as part of the Morocco Settlement, she acquired 107,000 square miles of French territory in the Congo, which were added to the Cameroons.

⁶ This and seven other appendices dealing in more detail with economic, legal, and political aspects are omitted.

⁷ Not printed.

13. Even, however, with her pre-war empire Germany was not a 'satisfied Power'. She still pushed her claims to territorial expansion on every possible occasion. During the War she dreamt of a German colony stretching across Central Africa from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic as one of the rewards of victory.

(ii) *The War and after*

14. With the outbreak of War the majority of the territories quickly fell to the allied Powers by conquest; only in East Africa were German forces still holding

Mandated Territory	Area (sq. miles)	Total population	European population	Imports (1934)	Exports (1934)
<i>Africa</i>				£	£
Tanganyika	360,000	5,540,000	8,230	3,000,000 ⁸	3,445,000 ⁸
Ruanda-Urundi	20,500	3,290,000	870	290,000	280,000
Togoland— Under French Mandate	23,700	762,000	420	416,000 ⁸	463,000 ⁸
Under United Kingdom Mandate	13,300	328,000	30	14,500	78,000
Cameroons— Under French Mandate	166,500	2,302,000	2,100	1,182,000 ⁸	1,367,000 ⁸
Under United Kingdom Mandate	35,000	780,000	320	113,000	193,000
South-West Africa	318,000	272,000	31,600	1,428,000 ⁹	1,690,000 ⁹
<i>Pacific</i>					
New Guinea	93,000	406,000	2,970	758,000 ⁸	1,873,000 ⁸
West Samoa	1,100	53,000	615	74,000	102,000
Nauru	8·5	3,000	160	78,000	377,000
Islands under Japanese Mandate	830	90,000 ¹⁰	100	530,000	1,100,000
Total (Round figures)	1,032,000	13,806,000	47,415	7,883,500	10,968,000

out when the Armistice was signed. During the War, Allied statesmen consistently denied that the Allies aimed at the annexation of territory. They stated, however, that one of their objects was to liberate peoples subject to German and Turkish misrule. It was in these circumstances that the mandate system came into being.

(iii) *The Institution of the Mandate System*

15. It must be remembered that the right of 'self-determination' was a fundamental assumption behind the Versailles settlement; and the mandate system

⁸ Note in original: 1935 figures.

⁹ Note in original: Approximate 1935 figures.

¹⁰ Note in original: Includes 40,000 Japanese.

was intended to be an application of it to colonial territories, whose peoples were 'not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.' By Article 22 of the Treaty (and of the Covenant) those peoples were placed under the 'tutelage' of 'advanced nations' as 'mandatories on behalf of the League' to promote their 'well-being and development,' which is 'a sacred trust of civilization.' The ex-Turkish territories, being in a more advanced stage of progress towards self-government, were placed under 'A' mandates. The whole of the ex-German colonies are under 'B' and 'C' mandates.

16. The main obligations of the 'B' and 'C' mandates, apart from that of promoting to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the natives, are:

- (1) The suppression of the slave trade and the limitation of forced labour to essential public works and services and then only for adequate remuneration.
- (2) The control of the traffic in arms.
- (3) The control (in some cases the prohibition) of the sale of liquor to natives.
- (4) The prohibition of military training of the natives except for police purposes and for local defence.

(It should be noted that the mandates for French Togoland and Cameroons contain the following proviso:

'It is understood, however, that the troops thus raised may, in the event of general war, be utilized to repel an attack or for defence of the territory outside that subject to the mandate.')'

- (5) The prohibition of military or naval bases or fortifications.
 - (6) The preservation of freedom of conscience.
 - (7) The rendering of an annual report to the Permanent Mandates Commission.
- In addition to these, the 'B' mandates contain the important obligation to afford
- (8) Complete equality for all nationals of States members of the League in respect of trade, commerce, immigration and personal status.

The United Kingdom, French and Belgian mandates are of the 'B' class, those of the Dominions and Japan of the 'C' class.

17. Appendix II⁶ contains the full text of Articles 118 and 119 of the Versailles Treaty by which Germany surrendered all rights to her overseas possessions, and of Article 22 which establishes the mandatory system.

(iv) *The 'Colonial Guilt Lie'*

18. The grounds on which Germany's colonies were not restored to her were set out in a memorandum and covering letter dated the 16th June, 1919, from the Allied and Associated Powers to Germany. They were threefold:

- (1) The unwillingness of the natives to return to German allegiance.
- (2) The nature of German rule in the past.
- (3) The use made by Germany of her colonies as bases of hostile action.

The evidence produced in support of these reasons constitutes what is known in Germany as the 'colonial guilt lie.' It should be noted that there is nothing in the Treaty itself on this subject.¹¹

¹¹ *Note in original:* This matter is fully dealt with in F.O. Paper C 3937/97/18. [Not printed.]

(v) *Post-War Colonial Policy in Germany*

19. In the period immediately after the War little was heard of German colonial aspirations. Germany was weak, and had plenty to occupy her nearer home. The German Government ostensibly kept aloof from the activities of the Colonial Societies formed for the purpose of impressing on the nation that the colonies must be re-won. On the occasion, however, of the German application for League membership in 1924, and again at the time of the Locarno negotiations in 1925, the German Government raised the question in principle of the award to them of a colonial mandate. In reply, it was pointed out to them that at the moment there were no vacant mandates available, but that should a new mandate become available at a later date, Germany would be just as eligible for it as any other League member. Since that date the propagandist activities of the German colonial societies have grown in intensity from year to year, and the reconstitution of Germany's military strength since Herr Hitler's accession to power at the beginning of 1933 has aroused new hopes and widespread enthusiasm in the colonial sphere. Herr Hitler himself did not at first advocate the renewal of Germany's pre-war colonial policy, though the demand for colonies has always been a point in the Nazi Party programme. Herr Hitler has, however, recently been converted to the colonial thesis, and when Sir J. Simon and Mr. Eden went to Berlin in March 1935 he produced for the first time officially a hint that Germany would demand consideration of the colonial question.¹² That demand has now been openly made.

Part III. Germany's Demands

(A) THEIR EXTENT

20. At times in the past it has seemed that propaganda in Germany was directed towards obtaining the return of Togoland and the Cameroons, at other times toward obtaining that of Tanganyika. Now the cry appears to be for the return of all the former colonies in full sovereignty. And indeed it seems possible that even with this Germany might not be satisfied.¹³

21. Nevertheless, she can hardly ask in the present circumstances for more than the return of all her former colonies in full sovereignty; and, in practice, she is not likely to press her claims to the Pacific Islands under Japanese mandate or perhaps to the other Pacific Islands under Dominions mandates.

22. To what extent such a demand would really represent national feeling, as distinct from propaganda, it is difficult to say. In modern Germany propaganda hides public opinion, and it also creates public opinion. The recovery of the colonies would undoubtedly be popular and would redound to the prestige of the Government; but we suspect that, outside a very limited circle of enthusiasts, the growing desire for colonies may still be largely due to artificial stimulus, and may not correspond to really deep-rooted feelings. It may be that many Germans now care less about the colonies themselves than about the alleged slur on the national honour caused by the colonial part of the Versailles settlement. It would, however, appear unquestionable that an increasing proportion of the population is becoming genuinely 'colony-minded.'

¹² See Volume XII, pp. 726-8.

¹³ At this point a note in the original quoted the full text of Sir E. Phipps's telegram No. 133 of March 28 to the Foreign Office; see No. 177.

23. It is equally difficult to say what is the minimum which Germany would be prepared to accept. We think that it would be very difficult to induce her to acquiesce in anything less than the transfer to her of colonial territory, but it is conceivable that in certain circumstances her claims for 'colonial equality of rights' might be met in some other way.

24. In any case it seems probable that if she were given one or two colonies she would regard these merely as the first instalment towards the return of all. It also seems likely that if she were given colonies under mandate, she would not be content permanently to abide by the restrictions imposed. Certainly this would be the case if the colonies of other Powers were free from such restrictions; for otherwise the sacred principle of 'equality of rights' would be infringed.

(B) REASONS FOR HER DEMANDS

25. We think that the reasons lying behind the German desire for colonies fall into three groups: economic, strategic and psychological, the last being by far the most important.

(i) *Economic*

26. On the economic side, Germany looks with envious eyes at the comparative prosperity of the United Kingdom, and attributes it, not without some reason, to the existence of the British Empire—the Dominions, India and the Colonies. She believes that if she had an empire, she too would be as prosperous. More particularly, she wants four things:

- (1) A field where her exports can be sold under preferential conditions and from which government contracts can be placed in the home country.
- (2) Openings for employment, especially of the young educated classes, in administrative and commercial posts.
- (3) Opportunities for emigration.
- (4) Areas under her own control and within her own currency wall from which to obtain raw materials and in which her people can invest capital.

From these she believes that a general improvement in her economic and financial situation would result.

(ii) *Strategic*

27. The strategic reasons are not often referred to in public, but no doubt with the example of Italy before her Germany is anxious, by broadening the basis of her economy, to place herself in a better position to withstand sanctions and to prepare for war. She must also be well aware that potential bases outside Germany would be useful to her.

(iii) *Psychological*

28. But, important though some of these reasons are, it is, we think, considerations of prestige which are the mainspring of Germany's demand for colonies. She regards herself as one of the greatest Powers, and she feels that she has a right to colonies on that account alone. Other Powers, some of them in comparison small and weak like Belgium or Portugal, have large colonial possessions, and she does not see why she should not have them too. She feels herself to be a 'dynamic' power; she feels that she *must* expand in one direction or another.

Finally, and most important of all, she regards her former colonies as her own property of which she was wrongfully deprived at Versailles, and her resentment is aggravated by the 'colonial guilt lie'—to her an intolerable relic of war propaganda—and by the implication that she is not worthy to hold colonies. In the name of 'equality of rights' she demands the removal of the 'lie' and the restoration of her empire.

29. We must also include among the psychological reasons the greatly exaggerated expectations which Germany has of the benefits to be derived from her former colonies. Undoubtedly there is great ignorance in Germany, as well as outside, about the nature and resources not only of her own former colonies, but of any colonies. The whole 'colonial problem' has, indeed, in our opinion, been magnified out of all proportion to the facts, so that it has assumed in world politics a psychological importance not justified by them. In the case of Germany, natural ignorance has been reinforced by her sense of grievance and by propaganda which has more regard to what she would like to obtain from colonies than to what she would obtain from them in fact.

(C) PROBABLE EFFECT ON GERMANY OF THE RETURN OF HER COLONIES

30. This is not to deny that Germany would obtain certain advantages from the return of her colonies. It seems important to determine as nearly as possible what those advantages would really be.

(i) *Psychological Effect*

31. If her colonies were returned to her, the 'colonial guilt lie' would be a thing of the past, the memory of this part of the Versailles *Diktat* would be obliterated, and her colonial empire would, in fact, be comparable at least in area to those of all but England and France.

(ii) *Economic Effect*

32. (a) *Export Trade*. Assuming that the returned colonies were brought within the mark currency system, the greater part of their imports would in present circumstances have to come from Germany itself. In Appendix III⁶ we give our reasons for thinking that of their normal imports goods to the value of perhaps £5 million a year would come from Germany, compared with the present figure of about £500,000. If the exports of the territories increased, as they would with intensive development, this figure might increase roughly in the same proportion. In addition, there would be special exports from Germany to the colonies in connection with development works. The capital expenditure required would be large, and would for a short period act as a valuable stimulus to exports, for much of the expenditure would be incurred in Germany itself. This might amount to another £5 million a year for the first two or three years at any rate.

33. (b) *Openings for Employment*. The number of Europeans at present engaged in Government service and commerce in the former colonies, including depend[an]ts, may be as high as 25,000. The number is not large, and no doubt some non-Germans engaged in commerce would stay on in the territories if they were transferred. We should be surprised if posts were found for as many as 10,000 Germans of the upper and middle classes; this opening might be a useful safety-valve to a Government which is embarrassed by the enthusiasms of just these classes, but it

represents a very small percentage of the amount of employment already available to such classes in the Party, in the fighting and civil services, and in commerce.

34. (c) *Emigration*. Only in South-West Africa and in small parts of Tanganyika is permanent settlement by Europeans possible. The total number of Europeans in all the former colonies is under 50,000, of whom probably less than half are of the settler class, and however much capital was spent we think it very unlikely that Germany could increase this number by more than 5,000 settlers a year and that only for a few years. The annual increase of population in Germany is at least 250,000.

35. (d) *Raw Materials*. There is much misapprehension both in Germany itself and in other countries as to the amount of raw materials she could obtain from her former colonies. The question is one to which considerable importance is attached in Germany. For instance, Dr. Schacht is reported to have said that Germany could obtain 70 per cent. of her requirements of vegetable oils and oil seeds and five-sixths of her requirements of rubber from the Cameroons. We think this estimate to be very wide of the mark. We have tried to estimate in Appendix IV⁶ the maximum production of raw materials which could be achieved in the former German colonies, and the following is a summary of our conclusions.

36. The present exports of the former colonies amount to no more than 5 per cent. of Germany's total requirements of raw materials. They include practically none of the industrial minerals she requires, only some 4 per cent. of the oils and fats, and very small amounts of many of the other non-minerals such as wool and cotton.

37. The possibilities of future production may be considered under two heads, minerals and other raw materials. The present annual exports of minerals, nearly all gold, diamonds and phosphates, amount to about £3½ million, and those of other raw materials to about £7½ million.

38. The chief mineral potentialities are in diamonds from South-West Africa and gold from New Guinea and Tanganyika. The resources of the territories in minerals other than these are limited to phosphates in Angaur (Caroline Islands) and Nauru, vanadium, low grade copper and a little tin in South-West Africa, a little tin in Tanganyika, Ruanda-Urundi and the French Cameroons, and resources which are largely unknown in New Guinea. We estimate roughly that if mineral production were pressed forward regardless of cost, as under German rule it might well be, in two or three years Germany might obtain annually copper and vanadium to the value of £750,000; diamonds to the value of £1½ million; gold to the value of perhaps £4 or £5 million; phosphates to the value of perhaps £750,000, and other minerals to the value of £250,000: say, £8 million in all.

39. With regard to other raw materials any estimate must again be largely conjectural, but, taking account of various limiting factors, we doubt whether Germany would do more than double the output in three years. The limiting factors which we have in mind are (1) the physical resources of the country; (2) the supply of labour available; and (3) the very great cost involved in intensive development.

40. The above estimates are admittedly largely based on conjecture, but, if they are at all correct, in three years' time Germany might, by great expenditure of money and effort, succeed in increasing the total annual value of the exports from her former colonies to some £24 million, compared with the present value of £11 million. This would be equivalent in value to about 12 per cent. of her present imports of raw materials. Any estimate of longer range development

must be even more conjunctural, but we should not expect expansion to continue for long at anything like the same rate.

41. (e) *Effect on Financial Situation and Currency.* The large capital expenditure required for the intensive development of her colonies, while giving a stimulus to German industry, would add to the burden of debt already borne by the Government of the Reich. Another point which has to be kept in mind is that some of the territories concerned are not self-supporting. The deficit for the current year in South-West Africa is estimated at £350,000, and that for Ruanda-Urundi at £117,000. This would be an additional drain upon the home Government. Furthermore, the territories have public loans outstanding to the value of some £7½ million, and have received advances from the mandatory Governments of at least another £10 million. Germany would presumably have to provide foreign exchange to meet the annual charges amounting to probably £500,000 upon the public loans, and the terms of any settlement would no doubt also contain provision for repayment of at any rate some part of the Government's advances.

42. Germany would presumably also have to provide compensation for any private interests adversely affected by the change. The amount of this compensation would depend upon the terms of the settlement, but it might well run into some millions sterling (see paragraph 90).

43. All these factors would reduce the financial benefit derived by Germany. In estimating the effect upon her currency there are other factors to be taken into account, as, for instance, the amount of extra raw materials which it would be necessary for her to import from abroad for the manufacture of the additional exports to her colonies. These factors are more fully set out in Appendix V.⁶ We should not expect the currency situation to be greatly improved.

44. (f) *Effects on War Resources.* As regards questions of immunity from sanctions and preparation for war, we have estimated that the amount of raw materials she could obtain from her colonies would be small. Consequently, any advantages she might derive in these respects must be correspondingly small. Actually, in war time, unless she had command of the sea, she would be able to obtain few, if any, supplies from her colonies.

(iii) *Summary of Probable Effects*

45. In short, though Germany would undoubtedly obtain certain advantages from the return of her former colonies, these advantages would, we think, be much smaller than she expects. Her *amour-propre*, though perhaps not her ambitions, would be satisfied; a considerable temporary stimulus would be given to her export trade; and she would find the limited opportunities for employment of her upper and middle classes useful. On the other hand, she would not be able to send out any substantial number of emigrants; she would obtain comparatively little in the way of raw materials; and she would find her colonies expensive, particularly if she attempted intensive development. The effect on her currency would be negligible, and the additional immunity she obtained from sanctions would be small.

46. No doubt a considerable time would elapse before all this became evident to Germany, and during that time her energies would be fully employed in endeavouring to develop her colonies. But when the truth began to dawn upon her, she might well advance reasons not very different from those now put forward to show that it was imperative for her, as a Great Power claiming a place in the sun, to have more, better and larger colonies.

Part IV. General Considerations affecting any Transfer of Mandated Territory to Germany

47. We now proceed to an examination of the general considerations affecting the transfer of any territory, however small. These, we think, may be grouped into the following categories: legal considerations; considerations of native rights and interests; and political, strategical and economic considerations.

(A) LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

48. The legal position is extremely complicated and we have felt it necessary to go into it in some detail. The position is fully set out in Appendix VI.⁶ Broadly speaking, the position appears to be this.

- (1) For the simple transfer of a mandate to Germany, provided that Germany were a member of the League and that there were no change in the terms of the mandate, the consent would be required of the Council of the League acting unanimously; probably also of the United States; and possibly also of Japan.
- (2) For the termination of a mandate and the handing over of a territory to Germany in full sovereignty, an amendment of Article 22 of the League Covenant would be needed requiring eventual ratification (not merely consent) by all States members of the Council and by the majority of the Assembly; also the consent of the United States, and probably that of Japan.
- (3) For the transfer of a mandate with an alteration in its terms: probably the same procedure as for (2) above, or possibly the simple consent of every member of the League in addition to the United States and possibly Japan.

49. The unanimous consent of the League Council to the transfer of a mandate would be hard enough to secure, while a transfer of sovereignty requiring the ratification, and not merely the consent, of the whole Council and of the majority of the Assembly would give rise to the greatest difficulties. Many members of the League would object strongly to an abandonment of the mandatory principle and would be reluctant to relinquish their existing commercial rights. The difficulties in the way of the transfer of a mandate with an alteration in its terms would be almost equally great. We regard these difficulties of legal procedure as most formidable.

(B) NATIVE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS

(i) Native Wishes

50. It can be argued that the natives of the territories have a legal as well as a moral right to express their wishes as to the identity of the Power entrusted with the administration of their country. However this may be, those wishes must so far as possible be respected. One of the reasons given in 1919 for the retention of the German colonies was 'the clearly expressed wishes of the natives,' and if their wishes were a real factor in 1919 they are equally important in 1936. It would no doubt be as difficult now as in 1919 to obtain a real opinion from the native population, but we doubt whether more than a very small fraction of the population in the territories under United Kingdom mandates would be in favour of a return to Germany.

51. We have already pointed out that the principle underlying the mandates is that the mandatory has to carry out 'a sacred trust of civilisation' to promote the well-being of the inhabitants of the territory committed to its charge and their development towards self-government. It is therefore the interests of the inhabitants of the mandated territories, we think, and not the exigencies of European politics which should be the primary consideration in any question of transferring or terminating a mandate. The Powers whose agreement would be necessary before a mandated territory could be handed back to Germany would require evidence that the change would not be inimical to the interests of the natives.

(ii) *German Treatment of Natives*

52. If all the allegations made in 1919 were true, it would be difficult to believe that such a change could be in their interests. For our own part we are prepared to believe that, while in the early years of German rule there were many abuses, in the years immediately before the War her rule had become more enlightened.

53. The important consideration, however, from the point of view of native interests is not what Germany did in the past, but what she would be likely to do in the future if she became again possessed of colonies. On this score we think that there will be many who would feel considerable anxiety. In a recent speech Herr Hitler, according to a newspaper report, criticized 'those Powers which excuse themselves for capturing colonies with the apology that they are going to civilize barbarous people. If the European nations adopt this weak conception,' he is reported as saying, 'their colonies will turn and throw off the yoke. If the ruling nations give way to the pacifist idea of allowing colonies to govern themselves, colonies will merely say "we do not need Europe any more."'

54. It is true that there have been claims that the Nazi racial doctrines provide that 'every people shall have an opportunity to develop under its own conditions of life, as the dark races would be able to do under German rule,' but in our opinion many would find it difficult to reconcile the authoritarian principles of government held in Germany with the principle that it is the duty of the superior Power to educate the native population in the art of self-government. There can, we think, be little doubt that the German desire for colonies is largely based on the theory that they are places to be exploited for the good of the superior Power, a theory which is utterly repugnant to the whole spirit of the mandates. The tendency towards exploitation would be strengthened by Germany's present economic necessities. For these reasons we feel strongly that the return of territory to Germany, if unaccompanied by some fresh and convincing proof of her adherence to the doctrine of trusteeship, would amount to a reversion to the doctrine of exploitation and to a retreat from the enlightened principles enshrined in the mandates which the United Kingdom Government have always claimed are applied already throughout the Colonial Empire.

(iii) *Check to Native Progress*

55. Even, however, were it quite clear that Germany could safely be entrusted with a mandate, we are faced with yet another important consideration, namely, the fact that the mere change of mandatory by itself would have a serious effect on native development. In Tanganyika, for example, in the last twenty years we have introduced a progressive system of indirect rule whereby Africans are enabled to advance steadily in the management of their own affairs, and the development of education as well as the increase in material prosperity have been remarkable.

It is certain that, whatever undertakings Germany might give, she has not the trained staff of African administrators to enable her to continue the government on the present lines. Even if the case of Tanganyika is not quite typical, we cannot doubt that in every case a change in the method and language of government could not fail to put back the clock of native progress.

(iv) *Currency Restrictions*

56. A further objection from the native point of view would be the introduction of a currency expressed in marks and based on the reichsmark, in the same way that the existing currency is based on sterling. If such a currency were introduced, as almost certainly it would be, the inhabitants of the territory would be subjected to all the disabilities in respect of currency to which inhabitants of Germany are subject. For example, among other things, the Government would take over all foreign exchange earned by the territories' exports and would issue local currency in lieu of it. On the other hand, it would convert local currency into foreign currencies only in exceptional circumstances. Whatever the provisions relating to non-discrimination in commercial matters, the natives would not in practice be able to buy foreign goods of any kind competitive with German goods, even if the latter were much the more expensive, because the foreign currency would not be available to pay for them.

(v) *Possible Advantages to Natives*

57. To counterbalance these various disadvantages, it is fair to say that certain advantages might accrue to the transferred territories. They would be assured of a ready market for all their goods in Germany, and they would no doubt undergo intensive development which, even if it entailed disturbance of native life and habits, would bring with it material benefits such as improved communications and health services. But we do not think that these advantages can really be regarded as weighing at all heavily in the balance against the disadvantages which we have set out above.

(vi) *Summary*

58. In summary, therefore, we feel by no means certain that Germany could be relied upon to observe the principles implicit in the mandates; and even if we were satisfied on this point, there would be serious disadvantages from the native point of view in the transfer of territory, without comparable advantages to set against them.

59. We think that public opinion in this country would almost certainly take the same view. We are less certain of the public opinion of other mandatory Powers, but such arguments as we have enumerated could hardly fail to be advanced by the representatives of some of those Governments whose assent would be necessary to any change in Germany's favour.

(C) **POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

(i) *Pledges*

60. Most of the mandatory governments have committed themselves to statements that they hold their mandates in permanency, and that nothing will induce them to give them up. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have

frequently repeated that the mandate for Tanganyika is permanent, that Tanganyika is 'as essentially a part of the British framework as any other Protectorate,' and that 'they have never contemplated any surrender of the mandate.' The various statements which have been made previous to March 1936 are set out in Appendix VII.⁶

61. Monetary compensation could no doubt be offered for what would be considered, rightly or wrongly, a breach of contract on the part of His Majesty's Government, and this aspect of the question is dealt with more fully in paragraph 90. But the difficulties of any such repudiation of definite pledges can hardly be exaggerated.

(ii) *British Public Opinion*

62. It is hard to estimate public opinion in this country or any other. Nevertheless, we have felt bound to make some attempt to gauge its probable reactions to any proposal for a transfer of mandates.

(a) *In the United Kingdom*

63. Opinion in this country is changing daily. Perhaps it might at present be divided into the following groups.

Against any transfer of territory to Germany are:

- (1) The 'diehards,' who would never give up an acre of territory now governed by Britain, be it colony, protectorate or mandated territory.
- (2) People of all shades of political thought to whom the idea is abhorrent that colonial territories and peoples should be bandied about to suit the exigencies of European politics. We have accepted, they say, a 'sacred trust' to promote the welfare of these territories and peoples, and we cannot abandon it merely to suit our own convenience.
- (3) Those who feel that it would be fatal to appear to yield to the importunity of a highly armed Power, and that, whatever assurances or guarantees might be given, the re-emergence of Germany as a colonial Power would be bound in the long run to prejudice the security of our own possessions.
- (4) Those who feel that, whatever may be the merits of Germany's case, there can be no question of concessions so long as the present Nazi regime remains in force with all that its programme involves of exploitation, religious and racial persecution and the glorification of force. British public opinion as a whole, friendly though it may feel towards the German people, undoubtedly has very little sympathy with National Socialism and a definite dislike of dictatorships.

On the other side are:

- (5) Those who feel that Germany is suffering from injustices which should be righted, and that therefore we should restore her former colonies with perhaps some safeguards for the benefit of the native inhabitants.
- (6) Those who are for 'peace at any price', and feel that the return to Germany of her colonies would go a long way to ensure this.

Finally, and including many of those in the first four classes, are:

- (7) Those who would be prepared to pay a considerable price, if it were required to secure a general settlement with a good chance of permanency.

64. In short, it seems safe to say that there would be strong opposition to any transfer of a United Kingdom mandate from widely separated schools of thought, actuated by different motives. At the same time there might, we think, be some pressure in this country to find means of meeting Germany's legitimate grievances in the colonial sphere without actually transferring territory in this manner. This pressure would be greater if it appeared that such concessions were essential to obtain a general settlement.

65. There would naturally be nothing like the same opposition in this country to the transfer of a mandate held by a foreign Power, though it might be regarded as merely the first step towards the transfer of a British mandate.

(b) In the Colonies

66. In addition to opinion in this country, His Majesty's Government must of course take into account opinion in the Colonies. Any transfer of territory would certainly not be popular in any part of the Colonial Empire either among the white or native populations. We have already dealt with native opinion in the mandated territories in paragraph 50. In the East African Colonies and in Tanganyika itself, the opposition on the part of the British communities to any surrender of the latter territory would be unanimous and absolutely uncompromising, and might even extend to armed resistance, with which it would be very difficult to deal. We visualize a situation in which the officers of the King's African Rifles might be called upon to lead their native troops against the white settlers.

(c) In the Dominions

67. Of the Dominions, Australia would, it seems, be strongly opposed to the transfer of her mandate over New Guinea. Both the Prime Minister and the Minister for External Affairs have made emphatic declarations on the subject recently, and there is no reason to suppose that the Opposition hold different views.

68. We have seen no recent expressions of New Zealand views in regard to the possible transfer of Western Samoa, but while she has experienced many difficulties in its administration, there is nothing to show that she would be ready to consider giving up her mandate.

69. The views of South Africa are similar to those of Australia. General Hertzog has stated on various occasions in the Union Parliament that, in his opinion, the ultimate destination of South-West Africa is incorporation in some form or another in the Union, and on the 6th May of this year is reported to have stated that the Union Government 'would not waive the mandate so long as the Union is in a position to comply with its terms'. Similar views have been expressed by other South African Ministers. In South-West Africa itself the majority of Europeans appear to be strongly for fusion—at the last elections the 'fusionists' secured three-quarters of the elected seats in the Legislative Assembly—and a Commission has been appointed by the Union Government to investigate the position. It is clear that the Union would not agree to the return of South-West Africa. They feel also that the retention of Tanganyika is important, partly for strategic reasons and partly for sentimental reasons—it was in the East African campaign that South Africa made her chief contribution to the war. At the same time many South Africans have a real fear that at some time in the future the black masses of Central and Western Africa will sweep down upon white South

Africa, and they regard with much suspicion the French policy of arming native subjects. For this reason a considerable section might be glad to interest Germany in the maintenance of white supremacy in Africa.

70. The foregoing would seem to show that South Africa would be firmly opposed to the transfer of South-West Africa; opposed almost as firmly to the transfer of Tanganyika; but perhaps in favour of the transfer of Togoland and the Cameroons, provided it was clear that this would not be followed later by a demand for the transfer of South-West Africa or Tanganyika.

71. It may be a matter of interest to add that the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia is reported in the press as having stated in the Budget debate of the Colony on the 6th May, 1936, that in his view the transfer of Tanganyika to Germany would be an absolute menace to Southern Rhodesia, Portuguese East Africa and Northern Rhodesia.

(iii) Attitude of other Mandatory Powers

72. The French, we believe, would be very reluctant to consent to the transfer of their mandates unless the United Kingdom were prepared to make a comparable concession, and unless the transfer formed part of a general settlement. There is the same 'die-hard' feeling in France as in this country, and the importance of her colonial empire to her is becoming increasingly recognised. On strategic grounds there would probably be strong objections to a transfer. On the other hand, there would not be the same feeling against handing over African natives to the tender mercies of the Nazis as there would be in this country.

73. Opinion in Belgium has shown itself very sensitive to tendentious public statements regarding the size of her colonial possessions, and the position is probably much the same as in France. In any case, the transfer of Ruanda-Urundi, her only mandated territory, could hardly be considered unless Tanganyika was also transferred.

74. Japan, the other mandatory, is in a different position from the European Powers. There is no inducement to her to give up any of her mandates as part of a general international settlement. Indeed, the satisfaction of Germany's claims to expansion might result in an intensification of Japan's aspirations in the same direction.

(iv) Attitude of other Foreign Powers

75. As regards other countries whose opinion would be of importance, Italy, like Japan, is hungry for colonial possessions. Being on the League Council she would be in a position to demand a price for her agreement to any change. On the other hand, the granting of Germany's claims would be regarded by her, and possibly others, as a useful precedent.

76. The lesser colonial Powers, Portugal and Holland, are both, like Belgium, extremely sensitive to any suggestion that they have a larger share than they deserve of colonial possessions.

77. Of the Eastern European Powers, Poland, on principle, would probably not obstruct a settlement of Germany's claims, whereas Russia, equally on principle, would oppose them.

78. The main object of the policy of the United States of America would probably be to ensure the continuance of her commercial rights in the mandated territories transferred. She would no doubt make use of the legal claim that her

consent is necessary to any change, in order to achieve her end. She would also feel strongly on the moral aspect, for it was largely through President Wilson's influence that the mandatory system was set up.

79. Turkey, the other ex-enemy Power, which relinquished her colonial possessions after the War, has embarked on a policy of national self-sufficiency, and has turned her back on the imperialistic traditions of the former Ottoman Empire. She might, as the price of her consent, claim some minor frontier rectifications in North-West Syria.

(v) *Effect on British Prestige*

80. It is perhaps convenient here to touch briefly on the probable effects on British prestige should we agree to any transfer to Germany of territory under British mandate. Events of recent months have somewhat impaired British prestige and there would be danger of the transfer appearing not as a gesture of goodwill towards general world peace, but as a sign of weakness. Particularly would this be so in Germany itself and in countries outside Europe and America. In Egypt, for example, should the present negotiations for an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty prove abortive, it would be said that Great Britain's attitude differed completely according to whether she was dealing with a powerful State such as Germany, or a weak and impotent one such as Egypt; and that right and justice did not enter into the question at all. The feelings of Egypt would be shared by the Arabs of Palestine and Iraq.

81. In tropical Africa and other parts of the Colonial Empire, any handing over of territory would most certainly be looked upon by the natives as a sign of impotence on our part, particularly in view of our apparent failure effectively to support Abyssinia when oppressed by a powerful European State. It would be hard to persuade them that we had relinquished our hold for any other reason than weakness.

(D) STRATEGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

82. In assessing the probable effects on Imperial defence of any transfer of territory to Germany, it is perhaps wisest to assume that, whether territories were restored to Germany under mandate or in full sovereignty, in practice there would be no effective restrictions regarding the military training of natives or the establishment of fortifications and bases. Experience has shown that such restrictions can be evaded with comparative ease, and are always a fruitful cause of friction.

(i) *Extra Commitments in Imperial Defence*

83. The presence in overseas territories of German forces would undoubtedly constitute, in the event of another war with Germany, an extra and unwelcome commitment, particularly if she were allied to Italy or Japan. Although it is true that the fate of overseas possessions is, in fact, decided in the main theatre of war, dissipation of military effort in the capture of the enemy's colonies is nearly always forced upon the Government by various considerations. Dominions might well be reluctant to send forces overseas to the main theatre of war until the immediate threat of enemy action from adjacent territory had been effectively dealt with. The defeat of such enemy forces, moreover, often requires a military effort out of all proportion to the seriousness of the danger.

84. On the naval side, the existence of German colonies overseas would

undoubtedly facilitate the operations of commerce raiders in war. They would have available more or less developed naval bases and communication facilities, which would be of great assistance to them. Provided that the ratio of Germany's naval strength to our own remains as at present, and that we are not also at war with Japan, our Navy should be able to accept this additional task; though in the event of a simultaneous war with Germany and Japan the matter would assume a very much more serious aspect. On the other hand, the very possession of oversea territory, providing as it would an increased responsibility for the German navy, might give Germany an excuse for claiming an increase in her naval strength. Herr Hitler, it is true, in his declaration of the 21st May, 1935,¹⁴ definitely disclaimed any such intention; but it would, nevertheless, be desirable to make specific provision for the maintenance of the present ratio of naval strength in any agreement for the transfer of territory.

85. There is a fear in the minds of some that the Germans, if they had their colonial territories back, would proceed to a wholesale mobilisation of the natives, and that this, combined perhaps with similar Italian activities in Abyssinia, would precipitate an 'arms race' in the large parts of Africa which have hitherto been practically demilitarised. We regard these fears as exaggerated. Nevertheless, the maintenance of German forces in neighbouring territories would necessitate some increase in the strength not only of certain of our defended ports overseas, but also of our military and air forces in the adjacent Colonies, particularly in East Africa. In this connection we understand that the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee have under consideration a detailed appreciation of the whole strategical situation resulting from Italy's conquest of Abyssinia, but are of the opinion that until the situation becomes more stable, a full examination of the strategical issues cannot be made. In these circumstances we have of necessity confined ourselves to certain of the more obvious strategical implications involved.

(ii) *Cape-Cairo Air Route*

86. Subject to the above qualification, the strategical implications of the restoration of particular territories are considered in Appendix I.⁶ There is, however, one aspect of a transfer of Tanganyika which has an important bearing on the air strategy of Imperial defence as a whole and which we feel we should mention here. The loss of Tanganyika would mean the severance of the 'all-red' air route from Cairo to the Cape and render impossible the movement of air forces between North and South Africa without flying over foreign territory. The existing civil air route to the Cape provides the necessary ground facilities essential for military aircraft in emergency and no *ad hoc* arrangements in the territory of possible Allies could replace it efficiently in such a contingency. The maintenance of this 'all-red' route is therefore of the highest importance. It must not be forgotten that the ability of the air forces of the Union of South Africa to relieve the British air forces in Egypt in an emergency increases the potential value of the latter as a strategic reserve for other parts of the Empire. (See also paragraph 110.)

(iii) *German Resources of War Material*

87. The restoration even of all her former colonies would, we consider, be of little value to Germany as a direct means of increasing her supply of war material.

¹⁴ See Volume XIII, No. 222, note 1.

Unless she had command of the sea she would be cut off from them on the outbreak of war; and even in peace, as we have already pointed out in paragraphs 35 to 40, these territories could supply only a small proportion of her needs in raw materials.

(E) ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

88. We have already dealt in paragraph 56 with the economic effect of a transfer on the native populations. It remains to consider the economic effect on other existing interests in the territories.

(i) *British Material Interests*

89. These interests are of varying importance. In some territories, such as British Togoland and British Cameroons, they are very small; in others, such as Tanganyika, they are much larger. They may be grouped as follows:

- (1) Advances which the United Kingdom and Dominion Governments have themselves provided or public loans for which they are responsible, totalling in all about £14½ million.
- (2) Capital directly invested both by settlers and by commercial concerns of the order perhaps of £15 million in all, which may now represent assets of substantially greater value.
- (3) The interests of officials and pensioners. In the United Kingdom territories there are about 1,000 white and a considerable number of Asiatic officials.
- (4) The interests of British shipping.
- (5) British civil aviation interests. By March 1937 approximately £1,250,000 excluding the amount spent by the Union of South Africa, will have been expended on the development of British air lines in Africa. The facilities for air travel thus provided have created a market of steadily increasing importance to the British aircraft industry.
- (6) The British share in the imports into British mandated territories, totalling about £3½ million a year, £1½ million of which are drawn from the United Kingdom and the remainder from the rest of the Empire. The British share of the imports into foreign mandated territories amounts to about £400,000. And a special but important interest in Tanganyika,
- (7) The interest of the East African Currency Board, which might be subjected to a serious drain on its resources from the withdrawal of a substantial portion of its circulation.

(ii) *Compensation*

90. The greater part of the British import and shipping trade would come to an end in the transferred territories, but compensation could hardly be asked for this. Presumably, however, the terms of any transfer would contain provision for the service or repayment of public loans and Government advances, for liability in respect of the currency now in circulation in Tanganyika, and for compensation to displaced officials. The position in regard to settlers and private enterprises might be a little difficult. There would undoubtedly be claims for compensation; but it could be argued, if the territory were merely being transferred from one mandatory to another, that no such claims would lie, since it would be a presumption that the new mandatory would observe its obligations in exactly the same way as the old. Actually it is quite clear that whatever the safeguards for

‘equal opportunity,’ currency difficulties would inevitably prejudice very greatly the interests of any concerns in the territory which were not German. Furthermore, in the case of Tanganyika it could very well be argued that much of the investment and settlement had only taken place on the strength of explicit pledges by His Majesty’s Government that they held the mandate in permanency. On these pledges at least a moral claim for compensation could be based. There might also be claims from foreign interests, other than German, in the territories.

Part V. Possible Courses of Action

91. We are now in a position to review the various possible courses of action which are open to His Majesty’s Government.

(A) REFUSAL TO DISCUSS THE COLONIAL QUESTION WITH GERMANY

92. One conceivable course would be to refuse to discuss the colonial question with Germany at all. We have, we think, made it clear that we are not inclined to underestimate the difficulties which any discussion will cause, but we very much doubt whether in fact a blank refusal to discuss would be practicable, if indeed a general settlement with Germany is to be reached. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, there can be no question that many Germans have a real sense of grievance, and to refuse to discuss the grievance would merely have the effect of increasing it. We think therefore that whatever the value put by Herr Hitler on England’s friendship it is too much to hope that such a refusal on our part would be regarded in Germany as an end of the matter.

93. According to Herr Hitler’s programme the discussion of the colonial question is to come after Germany’s re-entry into the League. If, therefore, the question is not to be discussed at all, the fact would have to be made quite clear before Germany re-enters the League. Otherwise it would be held that there was at least an implied assurance to discuss colonial matters.

(B) TRANSFER OF TERRITORY TO GERMANY

(i) Possible Advantages

94. It seems to us therefore inevitable that we shall have to deal with Germany’s claims, which as we have pointed out are likely to be for the return of the whole or the greater part of her former colonial empire, probably in full sovereignty. The advantages which it might be hoped to derive from the transfer of colonial territory to Germany may be briefly described as the removal of a source of friction in Anglo-German relations and the conversion of Germany from a dissatisfied into a satisfied Power. It is not certain, however, that the transfer of colonial territory would achieve these objects; it is arguable that it might create new points of friction in Anglo-German relations and that, far from turning Germany into a satisfied Power, it might merely increase her appetite. We do not concern ourselves in this Report with the details of any non-colonial aspect of a general settlement with Germany, or with the question whether such a settlement is likely to be a permanent settlement. We wish merely to point out that, if any surrender of territory by the United Kingdom should at any time be advocated, it is essential that its advocates should show exactly what benefits are going to accrue therefrom.

(ii) *Difficulties and Objections*

95. As against these somewhat problematical advantages there are the very substantial difficulties and objections which have been set out in Part IV of this Report and may be summarised as follows:

Legal

(1) Owing to the number of Powers whose consent would be required the difficulties of procedure would be very great. They would be rather less in the case of a transfer of a mandate than in that of a transfer in full sovereignty, but in either case they are such as cannot be lightly set aside. (Paragraphs 48 and 49.)

Native Rights and Interests

(2) A transfer in full sovereignty would be a retrograde step—a return to the old doctrine of exploitation and retreat from the doctrine of trusteeship which has been the foundation of the mandate system since the War and of British policy for a generation. The transfer would be contrary to native rights and interests which would be sacrificed to meet the exigencies of European politics. (Paragraphs 50 to 59.) Transfer under mandate would only remove this objection in so far as Germany could be trusted to carry out the terms of the mandate (see paragraphs 100 to 102).

Political

(3) Definite pledges given by His Majesty's Government as to the permanency of their mandates would have to be repudiated. To induce public opinion in the British Empire to countenance such a course, even to achieve a general settlement with Germany, would be extremely difficult and in certain circumstances perhaps impossible. (Paragraphs 60 to 66.)

(4) There would be great opposition in the Dominions to any surrender of their mandates. (Paragraphs 67 to 71.)

(5) There would be similar opposition in France and Belgium to any surrender of the mandates held by those countries. (Paragraphs 72 and 73.)

(6) Any territorial concessions would raise serious complications vis-à-vis other foreign Powers. They might also lead to demands for similar concessions from other 'dissatisfied' Powers and thereby cause further international friction. (Paragraphs 74 to 79.)

(7) The action might be interpreted not as a gesture of goodwill but as a sign of weakness. In particular, the effect on British prestige in Egypt and the Middle East and in Colonial Dependencies would be deplorable. (Paragraphs 80 and 81.)

Strategical

(8) The return of territory, whether by the United Kingdom or any other Government, would involve the British Empire in extra commitments in Imperial defence, both in peace and war. (Paragraphs 82 to 87.)

Economic

(9) Some material damage to British commercial interests would be inevitable, in greater or less degree. (Paragraphs 88 to 90.)

96. It may be argued that the British Empire got on very well before the War without the ex-German Colonies, and that it could do so again. In this argument, however, there are two fallacies. Firstly, the vital air route across Tanganyika is a new factor which has arisen since those days. Secondly, the argument altogether disregards the fact that we have incurred moral obligations toward the native inhabitants and our own nationals in the territories. These obligations raise important questions of moral principle, and are, therefore, more than mere difficulties to be overcome.

(iii) '*Tactical*' Objections

97. Viewed solely as a contribution to a general settlement with Germany, any transfer of territory seems open to further objections of a 'tactical' nature.

98. *Danger of yielding to Importunity.* First, there is the danger of appearing to yield to importunity. The restoration in whatever form of even a part of Germany's former possessions would probably be regarded by her as an admission in principle of the validity of her claims to the whole of them. She would therefore hope that further importunity would lead to further concessions. Where would this process end?

99. *Irrevocability of a Transfer of Territory.* There is a second very strong objection to the transfer of territory to Germany, whether in full sovereignty or under mandate. The object of any concessions to Germany would be to facilitate a permanent settlement of the problems which are troubling Europe. The settlement will have to include concessions on both sides, i.e., concessions from Germany as well as concessions to Germany. It is to be feared that any concessions which Germany may contribute will necessarily consist largely, or even entirely, of promises: for example, undertakings that she will not seek further expansion at the expense of other Powers, or that she will not increase her armaments above a certain level except by agreement with other Powers. These undertakings might not be permanently observed. The transfer of territory to Germany would, however, be permanent, in that it could not be taken away from her except by war. There is thus some danger that Germany might fail to carry out her part of the bargain, and might again prepare for war, and yet be left in possession of the price which the other Powers had paid for peace. It is most desirable, therefore, that any concessions made to Germany should, if possible, not be irrevocable, but should be dependent upon her future good behaviour.

(iv) *Special Objection to a Transfer of Territory under Mandate*

100. It is sometimes assumed that the transfer of a mandate to Germany would be comparatively unobjectionable, or at all events far less objectionable than the termination of the mandate in order to hand the territory over to Germany in full sovereignty, as she desires. We have seen that the purely mechanical difficulties of procedure would be less in the case of the transfer of a mandate without an alteration in its terms. Would the objections also be less great? This raises two considerations. The first and minor consideration is that with the best will in the world Germany would find it difficult to operate her present currency system in such a way as to comply with the non-discrimination clauses of the 'B' mandates. The second question is whether Germany can be trusted to continue to observe the terms of the mandate. If she can be trusted to this

extent, it would evidently be desirable, if only in the interests of the natives, to induce her to subscribe to the mandatory principles and to renounce all intention of returning to a policy of exploitation. If, on the other hand, she could only be expected to accept the mandatory obligations with a mental reservation that she would rid herself of them in defiance of the League of Nations and of world opinion at the first opportunity, it would equally clearly be wisest not to place her in a position in which she could present the world with another *fait accompli*.

101. There is in fact an obvious danger that if Germany were given a mandate, she might sooner or later try to free herself from the mandatory restrictions. At best she might attempt, by persistent and continuous pressure, to induce other Powers to agree to the change; but if other methods failed, the world might one day be told that for some reason, which might seem quite inadequate, the German Government had decided that they were no longer bound by the terms of the mandate, and had determined to restore their full sovereignty over their former colony. As recently happened in the case of the Rhineland demilitarised zone the Powers would then be faced with the alternatives of acquiescence or the use of force. These objections would apply whether the terms of the mandate remained as at present or whether they were modified in Germany's favour; in the latter case the practical as well as the psychological reasons for claiming full sovereignty might be less, but the opportunities for carrying out a *fait accompli*, particularly in departing from the naval and military restrictions, would be greater.

102. We do not consider that Germany can be expected to continue to observe the restrictions of a mandate, at least so long as the colonies of other Powers are not also held under mandate. Our conclusion therefore is that a transfer under mandate would in all probability be open to all the objections to transfer in full sovereignty, together with the very strong additional objection involved in the probable eventual seizure by force of the sovereignty which Germany had not been able to secure by agreement.

(v) *Conclusions as to the Desirability of a Transfer of Territory*

103. We are ourselves overwhelmingly impressed by all these objections to the transfer of territory to Germany and we do not think that such action would provide more than a temporary solution of any problem, while on the other hand it might raise new and even more difficult problems in the future. At the same time we realise that there are wider considerations of which we have not full knowledge and that these may render a transfer necessary despite the grave objections. If, for instance, it appeared that Germany set so great a price upon getting back her former Colonies that the return of one or more of them would tip the scales between peace and war, then we should hesitate to say that such action should not be contemplated.

(vi) *Special Considerations affecting Individual Territories*

104. We have therefore felt it necessary to examine certain special considerations involved in the transfer of individual mandated territories. The more important of these are set out below under four main groups, namely, the Pacific Islands, South-West Africa, East Africa and West Africa. Minor points are dealt with in Appendix I.⁶ We would emphasise that the general and 'tactical' objections to any transfer of territory which we have outlined above apply in each case.

Pacific Islands

105. Apart from New Guinea and Nauru, the Pacific Islands by themselves would be of little value to Germany. Any surrender of territory by Japan appears so improbable as to be not worth further consideration. To the Dominion mandatories there would be no inducement to give up any territory other than the desire to make a purely altruistic contribution towards the solution of the European difficulties of the United Kingdom.

106. The private capital invested in the gold fields of New Guinea is of the order of £4 million, the companies being mostly Australian or Canadian. In Nauru about £3 million of Government money (United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand) have been sunk in the phosphate industry and the carriage of this trade is of considerable interest to British tramp shipping.

South-West Africa

107. South-West Africa would be of more value to Germany than the Pacific Islands, since, in addition to its mineral resources, it offers some room for settlement. It would, however, go little way to satisfy her needs in raw materials. The Union of South Africa would be strongly opposed to the transfer of the territory and, as in the case of the Pacific Islands, there would be little inducement for a change of mind. The transfer would also be strongly opposed by the majority of the European settlers in the territory, who are now predominantly South African. The position of Walvis Bay, which has now become the chief port of South-West Africa, would require consideration. Before the War it was part of the Union of South Africa, surrounded by German territory.

108. The public debt of the Territory in the form of loans by the Union Government, amounts to some £2½ million, not counting railway deficits which have been made good by the Union. The capital of the Consolidated Diamond Mines of South-West Africa Limited is £4½ million, and there must be other private investment, for instance, capital invested by settlers from the Union.

East Africa

109. Tanganyika is more valuable to the United Kingdom, and, indeed, to the Empire as a whole, than any other of the British mandated territories. British material interests are considerable, the public debt amounting to £8½ million, of which over £3 million consists of direct loans from the Imperial Treasury, and the balance of public loans guaranteed by the Treasury. Private investments are certainly not less than £5 million. Its administration employs 950 white British officials and a large number of Indians. The total white British population is about 4,000, of which some 550 are land holders. There are also 350 British Indian land holders. Imports into the Territory in 1935 amounted to £866,000 from the United Kingdom and £550,000 from other Empire sources. British shipping is also substantially interested in the trade of the Territory.

110. We have already drawn attention to the great strategic importance of Tanganyika due to its position on the all-red air route to the Cape. In order to overcome the strategic objections to the severance of this route, it has been suggested that it might be possible to retain a part of the Territory, either along the coast or on the western side. There would be, however, great political and administrative difficulties involved in either proposal, and neither would altogether remove the strategic objections.

111. As we have pointed out in paragraph 66, the transfer of Tanganyika to Germany either in whole or in part would be bitterly opposed by British settlers both in the Territory itself and across the border in Kenya; it might even be resisted by force.

112. For all these reasons therefore we feel that, however much Tanganyika may be coveted by Germany, its surrender should not be entertained.

113. The impracticability of any transfer of Ruanda-Urundi, independently of that of Tanganyika, has already been mentioned in paragraph 73.

114. Any transfer of territory in East Africa would probably reopen the question of the Kionga triangle, a small area of the former German East Africa which once formed part of Portuguese East Africa and was restored to Portugal in full sovereignty after the War. This might involve the United Kingdom in serious complications since Portugal considers us pledged by treaty to uphold the integrity of the Portuguese colonies and dominions.

West Africa

115. We have referred in paragraph 35 to the high value which Germany sets upon her former West African colonies. The value which she might in fact derive from them is assessed in Appendix I.⁶ The British mandated territories, which are small in extent, would be of little use without the French territories. There would be great opposition in France to any transfer of territory to Germany but we are inclined to think that in this area there would at the same time be the least objections to be overcome and the best chance of giving Germany something which she would regard as of real value. It therefore appears that, should some transfer of territory be found unavoidable, the best solution would be to induce France to join with us in surrendering Togoland or the Cameroons (less, presumably, that part of the Cameroons returned to France in 1919 in full sovereignty) or both. It would be undesirable to upset the main features of tribal boundary adjustments in British Togoland and North British Cameroons, and our contribution therefore would probably have to be limited to South British Cameroons. The territorial contribution of the United Kingdom in this event would be much smaller than that of the French, and we should doubtless be expected by them to make some additional contribution of at least equal value. This, however, need not necessarily take the form of transfer of territory elsewhere.

(C) POSSIBLE COMPROMISES

116. We have reached then this position: that it is likely to be impossible to refuse to discuss the German claims at all, and that there are very great difficulties and objections to meeting those claims by returning even one of Germany's former colonies. Is there some middle course, some means, short of the transfer of territory, of meeting Germany's claims to an extent sufficient to liquidate the problem? We have felt justified in interpreting our terms of reference widely enough to enable us to consider this question.

117. Sir Samuel Hoare, at that time Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, gave a lead towards a solution on these lines in his speech at Geneva in September 1935,¹⁵ when he spoke about freedom of access to raw materials.

118. We set briefly below several proposals, some of which might be suggested

¹⁵ Volume XIV, Appendix IV.

as contributions to a settlement. In considering these proposals we feel that certain guiding principles should be borne in mind:

- (1) Any settlement should not involve the abandonment of the principles of trusteeship underlying the mandate system, and must have due regard also to non-native interests.
- (2) It should not put Germany in a position to present the world with further *faits accomplis*.
- (3) It should, if possible, be dependent on Germany's continued good behaviour as, for instance, by making the advantages of the settlement contingent upon her remaining a member of the League of Nations.
- (4) It should take into account the fact that the colonial problem is a wider problem than that of the settlement of Germany's colonial claims, and that any steps towards the latter should not prejudice the solution of the wider problem.

(i) *Declaration to meet the 'Colonial Guilt' Grievance*

119. One of Germany's objects is to secure the repudiation of the 'Colonial Guilt Lie'. It is evident that on this point it will be necessary to proceed with the greatest circumspection. The disavowal of the accusation made in 1919 would be exploited by the Germans as proof that all the guilt rested with the Allies for having fabricated charges merely as a pretext for retaining the German colonies after the War; and it would be the more difficult thereafter to resist Germany's claim for the restoration of the colonies of which she had been thus 'so unjustly deprived.' In any case, the disavowal of the charges made in 1919 would not be justified by the facts, which are set out in some detail in Foreign Office paper C 3937/97/18.⁷ Although the 1919 accusations may have been exaggerated, Germany's colonial record was far from stainless. On the other hand, there are blots on the record of most colonial Powers, and it is undoubtedly true that there had been a distinct improvement in German methods after about 1907. If the question of the 'lie' were raised as a separate issue, it might be possible to devise some formula which would satisfy German *amour-propre* without asserting that the accusations of 1919 were baseless. It may be recalled in this connection that before Germany first entered the League in 1925 she was assured that, as a member of the League, she would in theory be just as eligible to hold a mandate as any other League member. To that extent, therefore, the stigma of having been publicly proclaimed unworthy to administer colonial territory has already been removed.

(ii) *Anglo-German Condominium*

120. One proposal which has been made is that Tanganyika should be administered as an Anglo-German Condominium. Similarly, perhaps, other mandated territories might be administered as Franco-German or Belgo-German Condominiums. The only close modern precedents for condominiums of which we have any knowledge are the New Hebrides and the Sudan. In the latter case the condominium hardly exists except in name; in the former, the experiment is acknowledged to have been a failure. It is very doubtful whether any sharing of power between two States can ever be successful; friction and inefficiency are inevitable. There might even be fewer objections to a Government in which many

nations were associated, as, for instance, a League of Nations administration. This suggestion is dealt with more fully in paragraphs 150 to 152.

121. We doubt in any case whether Germany would welcome a proposal for an Anglo-German condominium. She might regard it as a continuance of the imputation that she was not worthy to hold colonies on her own. We do not think that the suggestion is worth pursuing.

(iii) *Association of Germans in Colonial Services*

122. Another suggestion, sponsored by Lord Lugard, is that Germans might be associated in the government of the former German Colonies. Aliens have occasionally been employed in the past in technical departments (forestry, medical, &c.), in British Colonies, and there would be no objection of principle to the admission of German subjects to such appointments in Tanganyika; though the fact that officers in these departments are liable to transfer to other parts of the Colonial Empire might give rise to practical difficulties. The admission of Germans to administrative posts, however, would be open to serious objections, since officials in such positions have to deal with defence and other secret matters.

123. A formal promise of a quota of German entrants without a similar promise to other foreign countries would require to be approved by a resolution of the League Council; otherwise it might be held that the non-discrimination provisions of the mandates had been infringed. Presumably, however, any general settlement would be laid before the League Council for their approval, and this particular point might raise no difficulty.

124. The scheme would admittedly be only a very small contribution to the solution of the problem of German middle-class unemployment. It might, however, be of some value as affording concrete evidence that there was a real desire on the part of the Powers to associate Germany in colonial administration.

(iv) *Facilities for German Immigration*

125. We have shown how small is the European population of Germany's former colonies, and the same is true of any colonial territory as the term is now used. Practically all such territories are in the Tropics and inhabited by backward races with which European labour cannot compete. Such immigrants as they can absorb must be provided with a certain amount of capital and the possibility of immigration is therefore limited. Even Kenya has a European population of less than 18,000. Actually there is at present no discrimination in any part of the British Colonial Empire, or, so far as we are aware, in the Dutch and Belgian colonies and small parts of the French Empire, against German or any other European immigrants. For what it is worth, Germany could without difficulty be given a formal assurance that her citizens should have the same opportunity for settlement as British subjects or any other foreigners in the whole of the British Colonial Empire, and probably some other colonial Powers would be prepared to give the same guarantee in regard to their colonies. If France were prepared to give such a guarantee, this would represent a real concession.

126. For large-scale immigration Germany would no doubt look, as she did in the past, to the United States, South America and those territories of the British Commonwealth which constitute the self-governing Dominions.

127. The question how far the Dominions would be prepared to contribute by encouraging the settlement of Germans is one which could only be answered

by the Dominion Governments themselves. It seems in any case that the unfavourable economic conditions for settlement now prevailing would preclude their doing so at present. If these conditions should improve, the grant of special facilities to Germans in preference to settlers of British stock would, in our opinion, be highly undesirable.

(v) *Equality of Treatment for German Enterprises*

128. Colonial territories generally offer more scope for development of their resources by plantation and mining companies than by permanent settlement. As in the case of settlers, there is in theory no discrimination against Germans or other Europeans applying for land or mining rights in the British, Dutch or Belgian Colonial Empires or in a small part of the French colonies. This is partly due to the provisions of international agreements and partly, as in the Dutch and most of the British colonial dependencies, to policy. In point of fact, however, the equality which is supposed to exist in the Belgian Congo and in parts of French Africa is problematical, since the provisions of the Congo Basin Treaties can easily be evaded. A formal assurance that equality of treatment would continue and would be scrupulously observed would be of value, and if it could be extended to the territories of colonial Powers who do not at present grant equality even in theory it might be a concession of some substance.

(vi) *A German Chartered Company with Administrative Rights*

129. We have also considered whether something more than equality of treatment could be given to German enterprises. In the mandated territories any such treatment would require the formal approval of the League Council.

130. One proposal which we have examined is that a large area in some British territory in Africa, not necessarily a mandated territory, should be granted to a German Chartered Company, on the lines suggested to the Colonial Office in 1934 by Dr. Voretzch, formerly German Ambassador in Japan, who no doubt spoke with the knowledge of the authorities in Berlin. His proposal, which was not entertained, was for the grant to such a company of authority to introduce German currency into their concession, to levy minor taxes and to perform administrative functions subject only to the overriding control of the local Government.

131. Any arrangement of this sort would to all intents place the native inhabitants under German rule, for, at any rate under present conditions, currency control can hardly be severed from full political control. In any case our present-day colonial policy is opposed in principle to chartered companies, especially those with almost sovereign rights. Such concessions have been found by experience to lead to friction with the supervising government on account of the natural tendency of the companies to consider their own interests before those of the native inhabitants. The scheme, in fact, seems to have practically all the objections of a transfer of territory without even the advantages of satisfying German *amour-propre*. We are not therefore in favour of the grant of such a far-reaching concession to any German commercial enterprises.

(vii) *A Large-scale German Development Company without Administrative Rights*

132. A modification of the above proposal has been suggested which would not be open to quite the same objections. While there are in our African territories

no really large uninhabited but cultivable areas available for alienation in compact blocks, there is much alienable land scattered throughout the territories. It might be practicable to make a grant to a German company of all such land within a large area, without, at the same time, giving the company any administrative rights, and subject to the safeguarding of existing native interests. Such an area could probably be found in South-East Tanganyika, where there are up to 50,000 square miles only sparsely inhabited by natives; much of this might on examination be found suitable for development by Europeans. A grant of this sort would be in accordance with the colonial practice of the Belgians at the present time, and there have been similar cases in British territory.

133. We doubt whether a Chartered Company without sovereign rights or a limited concession on these lines would have any great attraction for Germany. The introduction of mark currency into the area would probably be thought indispensable by her under her present economic and monetary policy, and this would be impracticable.

(viii) *Guarantees of Access to Raw Materials*

134. We have already pointed out Germany's difficulty in finding foreign exchange to pay for her imports of food-stuffs and raw materials, and we have tried to show that in this respect even the return of all her colonies would be of only limited assistance to her.

135. In the past political control of the sources of raw materials has not been essential to a nation's prosperity. The United Kingdom, with all the resources of the British Empire to draw on, is dependent upon foreign supplies of mineral oils, cotton and other important articles, but this did not prevent the Lancashire cotton industry from becoming one of the great industries of the world. Other countries, too, such as Sweden, have reached high prosperity without possessing any colonies at all. The growth of restrictions on international trade, however, and the modern tendency towards economic nationalism have raised new problems regarding access to raw materials, quite apart from the question of payment for them.

136. The Inter-Departmental Committee appointed to consider the implications of Sir Samuel Hoare's speech at Geneva last September emphasized that all the dissatisfied Powers had, in fact, equal access to colonial raw materials over most of the world, though no guarantee of its continuance. They reported,¹⁶ however, that these Powers had two more or less real grounds for apprehension: first, the fear of being held to ransom by international agreement among the various producers of raw materials; and secondly, the fear lest supplies should be withheld or made difficult of access, either in normal peace time or in time of war or emergency. The Committee therefore proposed that, if the matter were to be pursued, the best course would be to aim at:

- (a) A series of international agreements guaranteeing equality of access in respect of individual raw materials, whether colonial or not; coupled perhaps with
- (b) An international agreement guaranteeing equality of access to all raw materials produced in colonial territories.

137. We see no reason why both these proposals should not be pursued and

¹⁶ *Note in original: Vide F.O. Paper W 195/195/98 [not printed].*

we think they might be of some value as a contribution toward a settlement, particularly if the benefit of the guarantees were confined to States members of the League of Nations. Their value would perhaps consist more in the creation of confidence than in the removal of existing restrictions. One merit of the proposals is that there would be no necessity for the agreements in question to be signed by all the countries producing the various articles; though obviously the more countries which signed them, the more valuable would be the guarantees. All the agreements would, of course, be subject to the overriding obligations of the League Covenant regarding the imposition of sanctions, and special provision would no doubt have to be made for the contingency of any party to the agreements becoming involved in war. Safeguards would also have to be inserted to permit schemes for the regulation of production.

138. The first proposal involves action outside the purely colonial sphere. Nor do we see, at first sight, why the second proposal should be limited to colonial territories. Other countries such as the United Kingdom itself, the Dominions and India, might well feel able to agree to an omnibus guarantee of equality of access to all their raw materials. It is hardly within our competence to explore that possibility fully, but we feel that in this direction a real contribution might be made.

(ix) *Guarantees of Access to Colonial Markets*

139. The converse problem to that of access to colonial raw materials is that of access to colonial markets. There is no doubt in certain cases about the value of empire as providing a market for the goods of the mother country. In 1935 over 9 per cent. of United Kingdom exports went to the Colonial Empire, 8.9 per cent. to India and 30 per cent. to the remainder of the Empire. The possession of colonial territory has proved particularly valuable during recent years in which international trade has been so greatly reduced. For instance, the proportion of France's exports taken by her colonies has risen from 20.7 per cent. in 1931 to 31.6 per cent. in 1935. Thus, Germany, in common with all other powers who have no colonies, is undoubtedly at some disadvantage compared with the colonial powers. This disadvantage is resented by Germany in a special degree because she is one of the best customers for colonial goods. We have therefore considered whether it would be possible to make some arrangement which would give Germany special preferences in colonial territory.

140. Whether any proposal of this nature could be considered would depend on the general policy adopted by His Majesty's Government in the economic discussions which must inevitably form part of a general European settlement. If we aim at a return to a regime of freer trade, then clearly the proposal falls to the ground. If, at the other end of the scale, our policy is to be the extension of the system of regional preference in consonance with what appears to be the policy of the French, some scheme on these lines would be worth investigation. The broad question of policy is, of course, not one with which we are competent to deal, and we therefore deal with the suggestion in the light of present conditions only.

141. (a) *Special preferences to Germany in Colonial Territories.* One suggestion which has been made is the grant to Germany in colonial territories of special preferences over certain other foreign countries in view of her position as a 'good customer' for their exports. So far as British territories are concerned such preferences would

obviously not be greater than, and indeed need not necessarily be as great as, those enjoyed by Empire countries. It is clear that so far as the Conventional Basin of the Congo and the mandated territories are concerned there would be great difficulties in any alteration of the present regime.¹⁷ The Congo Basin Treaties can be revised only with the unanimous consent of all the signatories to them: these include Japan and the United States. His Majesty's Government have recently decided that it is impossible to hope for any such revision in view of the large number of countries whose interests would be adversely affected thereby. Equally difficult would be any alteration of the commercial equality provisions of the 'B' mandates, as it would involve almost the same procedure as that required for the termination of a mandate (see paragraph 48). It will probably therefore have to be recognised that no change is possible in either of these areas, unless conditions alter fundamentally.

142. The principle of granting most-favoured-nation treatment to all foreign countries alike is one of the fundamental principles of the commercial policy of the United Kingdom, though legal powers exist allowing discrimination in certain circumstances. It is also a fundamental principle of the tariff policy of the Colonial Empire, though in many dependencies it is subject to the derogation that special duties and quotas have been imposed which are, at any rate in effect, discriminatory against Japanese goods and so favour the United Kingdom and other foreign countries which are better customers than Japan. In the Dominions, particularly Canada, the principle is subject to much wider derogations. A general derogation in the Colonial Empire, however, would have grave repercussions, particularly if it were directed to favour a single foreign country.

143. (b) *Agreements for Equal Access to Colonial Markets*. There are, however, two other suggestions for guaranteeing to Germany access to colonial markets. These are that the colonial Powers,¹⁸ or at least the African colonial Powers,¹⁹ should

- (1) Enter into a multilateral agreement covering themselves and Germany, as a former colonial Power, but no other country, whereby they would guarantee to each other equal treatment in the markets of colonial territories; the agreement only to come into force in regard to Germany on her entering the League and to cease to apply to any party which left the League; or
- (2) Bind themselves by a formal undertaking to give equal treatment in their colonial territories to the exports of *all* States members of the League.

Both these proposals would guarantee Germany the continuance of the treatment which she at present receives in practice in the Congo Basin and 'B' Mandated Territories and would also extend to her such treatment in other territories.

144. So far as British territories are concerned, either scheme would involve a derogation from Imperial preference, which is one of the fundamental principles of the commercial policy of the United Kingdom, and indeed of the whole British Empire. A widespread reversal of this policy would meet with much opposition, both in this country and probably in the Dominions, while it would seriously

¹⁷ *Note in original*: For details of this, see Appendix VIII [see note 6].

¹⁸ *Note in original*: i.e. the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Union of South Africa, Belgium, Denmark (Greenland), France, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway (Spitzbergen, &c.), Portugal, Spain, and U.S.A.

¹⁹ *Note in original*: i.e. the United Kingdom, Union of South Africa, Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

prejudice the Colonial Dependencies themselves by making it increasingly difficult for them to obtain additional preferences in Empire countries, and might even lead to their losing those preferences which they enjoy at present. For these reasons, and also because two of the non-African colonial Powers are not members of the League, we should regard the application of either proposal to non-African territories as out of the question. If it were limited to tropical Africa, the objection of principle would remain, but the actual trade jeopardised would not be large. The Colonies affected would be Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Somaliland, Northern Rhodesia, which at present grant preference to British goods; Nigeria, where the possibility of introducing preference in the near future would be ended; and the Gold Coast, where the possibility of introducing it in the more remote future would also be ended. It would be essential to ensure that either proposal permitted the withdrawal of equal treatment from any country which discriminated, whether directly or indirectly, against the trade of the territories concerned. The inhabitants of colonial territories have export interests of their own which cannot be neglected, and without this reservation the compulsory grant of equal treatment would deprive them of the power to protect their own interests in foreign countries.

145. As regards other colonial Powers in Africa, Belgium should raise little objection to either proposal, but France, Italy and Portugal would hardly be likely to regard them with favour. It would not, perhaps, be necessary that identical action should be taken by all the Powers concerned, but it would be difficult to take action in the British territories unless similar action were taken in a substantial number of the foreign territories.

146. Of the two proposals the first would appear to offer more of a concession to Germany and would give more power of discrimination, but many foreign countries would be entitled to the benefits of it by virtue of the most-favoured-nation rights which they enjoy. In practice therefore it would probably amount to much the same thing as the second proposal. Japan would have no claim to benefit from either proposal in the four British West African territories so long as she remained outside the League, since she has no most-favoured-nation rights in them. In Somaliland and Northern Rhodesia, however, where she has most-favoured-nation rights, she would have to be given more favourable treatment than at present, unless these rights were terminated—a course which would involve difficulties.

(x) *Opening of Colonial Government Orders to Foreign Firms*

147. There is one other point which should be mentioned while dealing with access to markets. It is said that the fact that Government contracts are always placed in the home country gives an advantage to the colonial Powers, and it is argued that some arrangement should be made for them to be placed in the cheapest market, whether in the home country or elsewhere.

148. Most purchases of importance on behalf of British Colonial Governments are made through the Crown Agents for the Colonies. The annual volume of such purchases is now about £4½ million, but in peak years it has been some million pounds higher than this. In the case of territories under United Kingdom mandate, tenders are invited from selected foreign firms for important orders; otherwise purchases are normally made in this country.

149. Though the objections to so doing are obvious, it would be feasible to instruct the Crown Agents to place orders in the cheapest and most convenient

market, and it would no doubt be a gesture which would be appreciated by the dissatisfied Powers; but it would probably be found in practice that the great majority of the orders would continue to be placed in this country. The overhead costs of inspection abroad and the delays occasioned thereby might well offset the lower prices of the goods themselves.

(xi) *The Transfer of Mandated Territory to the League of Nations*

150. It has been argued that, rather than transfer to Germany one of her former colonies, it would be preferable to transfer the territory to the League of Nations, to be administered possibly by a League Commission, on the analogy of the Saar Governing Commission. Such a course, it is argued, would not only go some way towards satisfying the legitimate aspirations of the dissatisfied Powers to have some share in colonial administration, but would also afford a welcome precedent for international co-operation in the colonial sphere.

151. The proposal involves an amendment of the League Covenant and of the mandates themselves, but, provided the mandatory Power were agreeable, there is no reason to suppose that this difficulty would prove insuperable, since no other Power would stand to lose by the change. There are, however, serious practical difficulties to administration by a League governing commission which would be bound to give rise to continual friction and 'log-rolling.' In the case of Tanganyika the change might be resisted by the British settlers of East Africa little less strenuously than a transfer to Germany.

152. On the other hand, while the difficulties are great, the proposal cannot be ruled out as altogether impossible. The scheme would be an experiment, much as the whole mandate system was an experiment, only in this case the chance of the experiment failing would be much greater; but it might be less objectionable than the transfer of territory to Germany. We cannot pretend that it would give her much satisfaction.

(xii) *Extension of Mandatory System to other Colonial Territories*

153. Another suggestion which has been made in certain quarters is that, if we believe that the mandatory system is the best for colonial administration in backward countries, and certainly the best for adoption by Germany if she were to have any of her colonies restored to her, we should offer to place our own colonial territories under League mandate. The proposal is usually limited to colonial territories in Tropical Africa. Those who advocate the proposal generally have in mind mandates of the 'B' class containing the commercial equality clause.

154. In point of fact, our colonial policy in the Tropical African Colonies is already in a great measure in harmony with the principles of the mandate. Native policy is no less enlightened in the British Colonies than in the mandated territories. The main alterations which would be necessary in British practice consequent upon submission to a 'B' mandate would be as follows:

- (1) *Economic.* No change would be necessary in the territories covered by the Congo Basin Treaties, and comparatively small changes in the area in West Africa covered by the Anglo-French Convention. The proposal would involve the sacrifice of Imperial preference in the other dependencies of Tropical Africa and is thus open to the objections set out in paragraph 144.
- (2) *Strategic.* The obligation to prevent the establishment of fortifications or

military and naval bases would preclude the maintenance of the defences at Freetown and Kilindini, as well as at Port Sudan if the Sudan were included in the area. These ports are of great strategical importance, which is, indeed, likely to increase in the future. Moreover, the transfer of colonial troops from one territory to another would be precluded. Reservations would be necessary under both these heads; but the terms of the 'A' mandates and of the French 'B' mandates supply precedents.

- (3) *Annual Reports.* There would be an obligation to submit annual reports on the administration of the territories to the Permanent Mandates Commission.

155. There are, however, serious and probably insuperable objections of a different character, which seem to us to rule the project out of court. Among these objections are the following:

- (1) There would be the strongest opposition, both at home and in the British Empire as a whole, particularly from all British settlers in the territories in question and many sections of the native populations. Devotion to the Crown on the part of all sections of the population is one of the most striking characteristics of these countries and cannot be lightly set aside.
- (2) If a considerable number of territories in Tropical Africa were internationalised under League mandate, there might, sooner or later, be a strong demand among the dissatisfied Powers, and especially among other League members, for a redistribution of them in accordance with the principles of 'colonial equality of rights.'

Moreover, the provisions of the 'B' mandates for unqualified equality of economic opportunity are open to the objection that they do not permit retaliation against the trade of a State member of the League which discriminates against the trade of the territory in question, though safeguards might be evolved to cover this point.

(xiii) *Unilateral Declaration of Acceptance of Mandatory Principles*

156. A modification of the last proposal has been suggested which is not open to all the objections stated above. This suggestion is that, instead of placing the African territories actually under mandate, a unilateral declaration should be made that the principles of the 'B' mandates would be adhered to in the administration of the territories. As in the agreements suggested for guarantees of access to colonial markets in paragraph 143, the declaration might specifically state that equality of treatment would not necessarily be extended to the trade of any country, even though a member of the League, which discriminated against the trade of the territory concerned. Special reservations would have to be made permitting the necessary defence measures and unrestricted use, within an area in Africa to be defined, of native troops recruited in African colonial territories. The advocates of the scheme further suggest that the declaration might include a voluntary undertaking to submit annual reports to the Permanent Mandates Commission or to some similar body. This last obligation, however, would be open to many objections, one of them being that the inhabitants of the territories might have a right of petition to an authority other than the Crown.

157. If all the other Powers with possessions in Tropical Africa were willing to agree to make some declaration on these lines, the series of declarations might conceivably form part of some comprehensive scheme for the settlement of the

colonial problem. Moreover, if, in addition to agreeing to the use of native troops being restricted to Africa, all the Powers were prepared to accept a limitation in their numbers, it would go far to allay the growing feelings of apprehension which exist in Africa regarding the arming of the native populations, feelings which have been greatly increased by recent events in Abyssinia. Such an agreement might also serve to diminish the fear felt by Germany that native troops would be used against her in Europe. These arrangements would involve a new African settlement in which Germany, as a member of the League, would benefit by securing equality of rights, and would emphasise that the administration of African territories was in future to conform to the principles of trusteeship and of mutual consideration of all countries, and was not to be guided merely by a narrow and exclusive nationalism.

158. It might be difficult for the British Government to contemplate adopting this course unless the other African Powers were prepared to make similar declarations, for there would be criticism of a sacrifice of Imperial preference and other Imperial interests in British Colonies if no corresponding sacrifices were made in the colonies of other Powers. Nevertheless, in the last resort, if other colonial Powers were prepared to contribute in other ways to a settlement with Germany, a unilateral declaration of this kind by His Majesty's Government might be considered. Though open to obvious objections, we do not entirely rule it out.

(xiv) *International Commission for Tropical Africa*

159. It has been suggested in various quarters that in order to inspire confidence in the effectiveness of several of the measures dealt with above, an International Commission either within or separate from the machinery of the League of Nations should be set up to supervise their working. The body would presumably be responsible, for instance, for ensuring that guarantees of equality in regard to immigration, access to raw materials and markets were observed in practice. It is argued that without some such body the dissatisfied Powers might not actually receive that equality of treatment which these various guarantees purported to give them. Apart from the natural tendency for trade to follow the flag, the controlling Power, it is said, not infrequently exercises administrative, as opposed to legal, discrimination in favour of its own nationals.

160. An International Commission such as is proposed would no doubt prove a troublesome body to those concerned with colonial administration. On the other hand the proposal has the advantage that Germany could be adequately represented on the Commission, and it would, therefore, be to some extent an indication of the willingness of the colonial Powers to associate her in colonial enterprise. It might perhaps be found to be a useful piece of 'window-dressing,' and for that reason a proposal not to be altogether ruled out of account. But it is not one which could be accepted unless it were universally applied in respect of all the important African colonial Powers.

(xv) *Summary of Possible Compromises*

161. We may summarize the proposals which we have considered as follows.

- (i) A declaration to meet the 'colonial guilt' grievance. (Paragraph 119.)
- (ii) An Anglo-German Condominium. (Paragraphs 120, 121.)

- (iii) Association of Germans in the Services of mandated territories. (Paragraphs 122 to 124.)
- (iv) A formal assurance of equal opportunities for German immigrants in colonial territories. (Paragraphs 125 to 127.)
- (v) A formal assurance of equality of treatment for German enterprises in colonial territories. (Paragraph 128.)
- (vi) A German Chartered Company with certain administrative rights and power to issue its own currency. (Paragraphs 130, 131.)
- (vii) A large scale German Development Company without administrative rights. (Paragraphs 132, 133.)
- (viii) Guarantees of equality of access to raw materials (including foodstuffs) as follows:
 - (a) of certain specified raw materials, whether produced in colonies or not
 - (b) of all raw materials from colonial territories and possibly from other countries too. (Paragraphs 134 to 138.)
- (ix) Guarantees of access to colonial markets by means of
 - (a) Special preferences to Germany, as a 'good customer,' for her exports in colonial markets. (Paragraphs 141, 142.)
 - (b) International agreements for equal access, probably limited to Tropical Africa. These might take the form of:
 - (1) An agreement among all the colonial Powers and Germany to give each other equality while members of the League; or
 - (2) An undertaking by the colonial Powers to give equality to all Powers members of the League. (Paragraphs 143 to 146.)
- (x) Some arrangement whereby orders of colonial Governments are not placed solely in the country of the controlling Power. (Paragraphs 147 to 149.)
- (xi) The transfer of mandated territories to direct League of Nations control (Paragraphs 150 to 152.)
- (xii) The extension of the mandatory system to other colonial territories. (Paragraphs 153 to 155.)
- (xiii) A unilateral declaration by the various colonial Powers of the acceptance of the principles of the mandates in the administration of colonial territories, probably limited to Tropical Africa. (Paragraphs 156 to 158.)
- (xiv) The establishment of an International Commission for Tropical Africa. (Paragraphs 159, 160.)

162. Owing to the serious objections to them which we have already pointed out, we do not consider that proposals (ii), (vi) and (xii) should be further considered. Of the remainder, some seem to us unobjectionable, as, for instance, (iv) and (viii), but most are open to various criticisms, amongst others, that they might involve an undue sacrifice of British interests. Further examination of these schemes and consultation with the Dominions and other countries concerned would be necessary before they could or should be incorporated in any concrete proposals to Germany.

163. In the course of this examination it would be necessary to bear in mind that the economic relations between Germany and all the other countries involved are not uniform. For example, the Anglo-German Payments Agreement²⁰ is a factor to be taken into account in considering any proposals by which the various colonial Powers should make equal sacrifices in different ways to meet German

²⁰ Cf. Volume XII, Nos. 153 and 154.

claims. It is true that the agreement was the result of a bargain by which both sides hoped to obtain certain advantages and have, in fact, obtained them, but by reason of the provisions of the agreement the United Kingdom does enable Germany to obtain sufficient free exchange to buy large quantities of raw materials, while France, at any rate, does nothing of the kind. It is also perhaps for consideration whether, if Germany obtained greater facilities for procuring raw materials as the result of any action by His Majesty's Government in the colonial sphere, some endeavour should not be made to induce Germany to undertake to obtain some part of these increased supplies from the Colonial Empire or, at any rate, by purchases on the United Kingdom market. The re-export and colonial clause of the Payments Agreement²¹ does not oblige Germany to make any such purchases.

164. To the best of our belief, we have considered the only possible colonial concessions short of a transfer of territory, and if, as seems to us to be the case, discussion of the colonial question is inevitable, it might be necessary to make use of them, or some of them, in the discussion in order to avoid such a transfer. At the same time, many of these concessions would be of little substantial value to Germany, and even if they are regarded rather as political contributions than as substantial economic concessions, they do not make a very imposing array.

(D) CONCLUSIONS AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF SATISFYING GERMANY IN THE COLONIAL SPHERE

165. As regards the political aspect of this question our own view is that however generously Germany is treated in the colonial sphere, she will not necessarily be diverted from pursuing her aspirations in Europe. Even in the colonial sphere itself the return of all her former colonies, though it would for the time being meet her claims, would not satisfy her ambitions in the long run. This is because she feels herself to be a growing force in the world; she thinks of colonies in terms of world power; and ideas of 'trusteeship' and 'responsibility' in connection with colonial possessions have not yet made progress in the German mind. This leads us to a wider aspect of the colonial question. Obviously the exclusive national policy now being followed, for example, in the French colonies, besides putting a premium on the possession of colonies, increases the emphasis on national rivalries and places a further obstacle in the way of international appeasement. If colonies could be administered so as to confer little or no exclusive economic benefit to the administering Powers, the question which Powers provided the administration might lose much of its present importance. An advance in this direction would not for the moment appeal to Germany. It might in theory contribute to eventual pacification in the colonial sphere, but it would raise such important questions in regard to defence and some of the basic principles of inter-Imperial relations that we do not feel competent to pursue the matter further.

166. So far as purely economic matters are concerned, Germany could not

²¹ *Note in original:* This clause reads as follows: 'The German Government, in allocating foreign exchange for purchases of raw materials and food-stuffs which Germany has been accustomed to purchase either through the United Kingdom or as re-exports from the United Kingdom or direct from the British Colonies, will take no measures to reduce the customary proportions enjoyed by the United Kingdom and the British Colonies in the supply to Germany of these goods.'

possibly obtain from a return of her colonies the advantages which she requires to relieve or even to mitigate her present state of distress. If she were not in such distress, if she had no unemployment, if she were not in difficulties over obtaining raw materials, and if her export trade were in a really healthy condition, then her claim for colonies would have to shift its footing, and might conceivably diminish in intensity, though this is by no means certain. There is a connection between Germany's colonial claims and the complex of economic problems now facing the world. From this point of view, these claims and desires of Germany, as of other 'dissatisfied' Powers, are a secondary manifestation of more profound disequilibria. It is no part of our business to consider how the economic ills of the world in general or of Germany in particular are to be righted; but it is our conviction that if contributions possible in the colonial sphere are to be made effective, they must be combined with an attack upon the fundamental problems themselves.

Part VI. General Conclusions

167. The broad conclusions which we have reached in the course of our examination of the problem before us may be summed up as follows.

- (i) Germany will seek the return of all her former colonies in full sovereignty, but will probably not press her claims to the Japanese Islands, and possibly not to the other Pacific Islands under Dominion Mandates. It will be difficult to dispose of Germany's colonial claims by anything less than a transfer of territory, but perhaps not impossible.
- (ii) The reasons for her colonial demands are economic, strategic and psychological, the last being by far the most important.
- (iii) The return of even all her colonies, although it would perhaps temporarily satisfy her on the psychological side, would not improve her economic position to anything approaching the extent she expects.
- (iv) A blank refusal on the part of His Majesty's Government to discuss the colonial question is impracticable, if a general settlement with Germany is to be reached.
- (v) To the transfer of any mandated territory to Germany in full sovereignty there are objections, based both on moral principle and on considerations of material advantage and expediency, which appear overwhelming, apart altogether from formidable difficulties of procedure.
- (vi) To a transfer of mandated territory under mandate there are the same and some additional objections (*vide* paragraph 100), though the difficulties of procedure would not be quite so great.
- (vii) If, however, wider considerations are held to outweigh these grave objections, and if the transfer of territory has to be considered, the least objectionable course would be for France to join with us in the surrender of the whole or part of Togoland or the Cameroons, or both. In this case our contribution would be much smaller than that of France, who would no doubt expect us to make contributions, perhaps not necessarily by the transfer of territory, to equalise the sacrifice. The surrender of Tanganyika would be open to such special objections that it should not be entertained.
- (viii) But in any circumstances there remain special objections to any settlement

with Germany which involves irrevocable concessions to her (such as the transfer of territory) and no such irrevocable concessions by her.

- (ix) Several schemes, short of a transfer of territory, designed to provide some satisfaction to Germany on the political side and some alleviation of her economic difficulties, are summarised in paragraph 161 but most of them would require further examination. They would not by themselves go far towards satisfying Germany's claims, but might be useful in any negotiations undertaken.
- (x) Germany's desires cannot be satisfied in the colonial sphere either politically or economically. Such contributions as are possible in the colonial sphere should be combined with an attack on the wider and more fundamental problems underlying the political and economic discontents of the world.²²

²² The report concluded with the signatures of the Earl of Plymouth and the nine other members of the Sub-Committee.

Minutes commenting on the report by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, Mr. Sargent, Sir R. Vansittart, Mr. Eden, and Lord Cranborne show general agreement as to the impracticability of any surrender of mandated territory to Germany.

Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin wrote: 'I went into this Committee with some prejudices in favour of trying to do something to meet Germany's colonial claims if peace in Europe could be secured thereby. But I became increasingly impressed by the difficulties in the way of any surrender of a mandated territory to Germany. Tanganyika and S.W. Africa seem to me to be quite out of the question; Togoland and the Cameroons would involve a maximum sacrifice to France; we could hardly ourselves at any time put this forward as a British suggestion.

So the answer to the main question put to the Committee is No.

The alternatives suggested in para. 161 are no real answer to anything, certainly not to the German claim for colonies. [Marginal comment by Sir R. Vansittart: 'I agree—none R.V.']. They are a scrappy collection of unimpressive concessions—except perhaps the raw material enquiry.

This we owe to Germany, to the rest of the world and to ourselves, especially after Sir S. Hoare's speech; and the enquiry, although no answer to the German colonial claim, should serve to explode a lot of nonsense that is being bandied about in connection with the colonial question. [A marginal comment by Sir R. Vansittart here read: 'By all means let us hold it, but we know it will lead nowhere. I always thought of this theme as a time-gaining device, and no more. R. V.'].]

The real solution is not to be found in a return of colonies to Germany, but (1) in modifying the nationalistic attitude towards colonies of the colony-holding powers, and (2) in modifying our own trade policy and influencing that of others so as to allow an extension of Germany's export markets. We got some hint of these things into paras. 165 and 166, but so much water was added to our draft that the original flavour was lost. F. A. Gwatkin. 17/6/36.' Marginal comments by Sir R. Vansittart and Mr. Eden at this point were as follows.

'I am grateful for Mr. Gwatkin's valuable contribution to this work. R.V.' 'Yes, and I am interested in his minute. A. E.'

Mr. Sargent wrote: 'Mr. Baxter is to be congratulated on his share in producing what is a most valuable and comprehensive report.

When this report comes before the Cabinet I think it ought to be accompanied by a Foreign Office appreciation of the questions of policy and tactics . . .

Such an appreciation had best be drafted by a small departmental Committee. O. G. Sargent. June 22nd, 1936.'

Sir R. Vansittart wrote: 'I agree with Mr. Sargent's minute.

I expected no other finding from the Committee. My paper earlier in the year [Volume

XV, Appendix IV(b)] advocated a colonial transfer as part, or only as part, of a durable European Settlement, *if* that could be obtained. [Mr. Eden commented here: 'That is what I should have been prepared to contemplate in West Africa. A. E. June 24.'] There is no sign that such a settlement can be obtained. If therefore the Govt. adopt this report, they will also be confirming the preceding sentence—with all that it implies.

What it eventually implies is this. If we are *not* going to remove the last partly-legitimate German grievance we shall enter upon a period of bad relations with Germany, which will hamstring us in any mediation,—on the hypothesis that any successful mediation was ever possible, which I doubt, though we are doing our best. And ultimately these bad relations will be followed by war. We shall have to fight to keep Germany out of the colonial sphere. Will the nation think the game worth the dizzy taper? I wonder—when we get to the point. And unless we are both careful and clever we shall get these hostilities before we are ready. I think the Govt. must face these facts before coming to a decision. And it must be remembered that since this report was written, the Germans have shown that they are going to run Colonial propaganda harder than ever. And how much assistance shall we get from the Empire in case of war? Their contributions to Imperial Defence are mighty small at present. R. V. June 22.'

In a minute addressed to Lord Cranborne, Mr. Eden wrote: 'Is there not something to be said for declaring our attitude—if it is to be negative—now? The German Chancellor has not yet committed himself on the Colonial issue, and a firm & timely declaration by us might warn him off, if as I believe the Colonies are a secondary (or even lower in the list) objective with him and, as I still believe, he does [*? not*] want bad relations with us. I should like this considered. Any declaration would have to be accompanied by proposal of raw material inquiry. It is important not to lose sight of this report. If the Cabinet does not take it soon, I must ask. A. E. June 24th.'

Lord Cranborne wrote: 'I should be in favour of such a declaration. In a conversation which I had with Mr. Newton the other day, he told me that in his opinion a clear definition of our view would be valuable. He did not think that the Chancellor himself cared deeply about the Colonial question. It found no place in *Mein Kampf*. But he was allowing himself to be urged into a position from which he might find it later impossible to withdraw. If we now made a clear declaration that we would *not* give up the Colonies, desire not to quarrel with us would probably be enough to make him draw in his horns before things had gone too far for him to retire. This view seems a sound one, and it is borne out by other evidence that Herr Hitler remains most concentrated on the aims which he laid down in *Mein Kampf*. He might not discard colonial ambitions, but they might well be put into cold storage. Moreover, Sir R. Vansittart very justly points out that as the possibility of obtaining a general European settlement recedes, the need for keeping open the question of the Ex-German Colonies as a bargaining counter ceases to have the same importance. All these factors tend in favour of some strong declaration by us on the Colonial question. C. 27. 6.'

APPENDIX IV

Sir Walford Selby's views on the Austro-German agreement of July 11, 1936¹

Sir W. Selby (Vienna) to Mr. Eden (Received July 23)

No. 215 [R 4438/73/3]

VIENNA, July 18, 1936

Sir,

It may be useful if I submit some observations on the Austro-German settlement in amplification of the reports which I have already had the honour to send by telegram or despatch. I will preface my remarks by a brief retrospect.

2. Austria emerged from the War broken and dispirited. The problem of the country as of the population was one of existence. Austrians generally felt that the country could not live alone and to them the most natural solution seemed to lie in close connection or *Anschluss* with Germany. This solution however was refused by the Great Powers. In the meantime there was genuine distress and even starvation among many classes. Conditions however gradually improved with the passage of time and the assistance afforded by the League of Nations, in which Great Britain played so large a part, but it appeared to many observers that this hand-to-mouth existence did not provide a permanent solution for the future of Austria and that some close connection with Germany was at some time or other inevitable. The two main political parties in Post-War Austria were the Social-Democrats and the Christian Socials. The former obtained complete control of Vienna which comprises nearly one third of the population of the country, while the strength of the latter lay chiefly among the professional and upper classes and the provinces. So far as internal stability was concerned, it seemed possible that the country might be able to carry on under this peculiar form of dyarchy as the old ramshackle Empire had existed. Both parties at that time stood for friendly relations with Germany; relations with Italy on the other hand were bad, especially from the advent of Signor Mussolini to power. Parliamentary government however proved a farce and the internal political situation went from bad to worse. The *Anschluss* was again decided on and again vetoed, this time by a decision of the Permanent Court of International Justice.² The turning point for Austria came with the appointment of Dr. Dollfuss as Chancellor³ and the rise of Herr Hitler to power in Germany. The latter's views in regard to Austria were well-known; one of his cardinal points was the absorption of Austria in the Third Reich. Dr. Dollfuss appeared as the champion of Austria in opposition to Herr Hitler but at the same time he did not cease to reiterate that Austria was a German State.

3. Dr. Dollfuss realised that it was impossible for Austria to carry on and at the

¹ See No. 436, note 4.

² Announced on September 5, 1931.

³ On May 20, 1932.

same time have strained relations with her two greatest neighbours Italy and Germany. Friendly relations with the Germany of Herr Hitler being out of the question Dr. Dollfuss turned to Signor Mussolini and his policy was thenceforward carried out in the closest consultation and collaboration with the Italian Dictator. Parliamentary Government in Austria was abolished. Socialist Vienna was destroyed in February 1934. The Rome Protocols between Italy, Austria, and Hungary, providing for close collaboration, political, cultural and economic between the three countries, were concluded in the following month. During all this time Nazi propaganda was being intensified in Austria, and finally a Nazi Putsch abetted by Herr Hitler took place on the 25th July 1934, when Dr. Dollfuss met his end. The value of the close connection which had been established between Austria and Italy was then shown in a practical form by the appearance of Italian troops on the Brenner. Herr Hitler was not ready for war and capitulated, denying that he had had any share in the Putsch.

4. Dr. Dollfuss was followed by Dr. von Schuschnigg as Chancellor, with Prince Starhemberg as Vice Chancellor. Both accepted their heritage of the Italian connection, Dr. von Schuschnigg perhaps with some reservation in regard to its suitability for a German State, Prince Starhemberg with the most ardent enthusiasm. In their public utterances, the former was always guarded in his references to Germany and, while proud of his Austrian heritage, never allowed it to be forgotten that it was also a German heritage; the latter exhausted his considerable vocabulary of invective with complete impartiality against Nazis and against Socialists alike. Prince Starhemberg with the backing of his *Heimwehr* appeared to be the stronger of the two men and it seemed therefore likely that, when the incompatibilities between the two became acute, Dr. von Schuschnigg would be the one to go under, even though his character and his antecedents brought him a larger following in the country. However, for some time both worked in harness together and both frequently declared that there was no difference between them.

5. Relations with Italy became closer and the economic advantages of the connection became more real. Nazis and Socialists continued to be relentlessly pursued by the Austrian Government. Neither movement was however destroyed; their activities were only driven underground; and the totalitarian state on Fascist lines was slowly being built. Although the Government was successful in maintaining law and order in the country there were few signs that their policy was popular, partly on account of the slow improvement in the economic situation, and partly on account of the Italian connection and of the bad relations which continued to exist with Germany. In regard to the latter country, the foreign observer in Vienna could not but be struck with the courage and determination with which Dr. von Schuschnigg and his Government held fast to their faith in the ability of Austria to stand by herself and refused to capitulate to the renegade Austrian⁴ who swayed the destinies of the Third Reich. While clinging to the protection of Signor Mussolini they showed every anxiety to stand well with France and Great Britain, their hope being that Austrian independence would be assured by participation in a general scheme of collective security. The Franco-Italian Agreement of January 1935 and the subsequent Stresa Agreement⁵ were therefore warmly welcomed here. The Austrian Government's faith in collective security was however to undergo some rude shocks in the succeeding eighteen months.

⁴ i.e. Adolf Hitler.

⁵ Of April 14, 1935: see Volume XII, No. 722.

In March 1935 Herr Hitler announced the introduction of universal service in Germany and suffered no punitive action by the Great Powers in consequence. The League of Nations failed to save Abyssinia from an act of aggression. Herr Hitler occupied the Rhineland and the French did not march. The Austrian Government may have argued that if the Great Powers did not move in a matter which so closely affected themselves they would certainly not move in the defence of Austria. A Left Government was about to come into power in France and the Austrian Government may have felt that they could not expect the same sympathy from Monsieur Blum as they had received from Monsieur Laval. Amid this general international uncertainty the partners of the Rome Protocols decided, in March of this year, to reaffirm their faith, Austria preferring the present value of Signor Mussolini's friendship to the uncertainties of a possible different alignment in future. Meanwhile the 'war' with Germany showed no signs of abating though the events outlined in this paragraph pointed to at least the possibility of its early termination by agreement between the two parties.

6. Herr von Papen had been sent to Vienna in August 1934 as German Minister on a 'special mission' with the object of restoring good relations between the two countries. He was however universally distrusted and it seemed unlikely that he would be successful in his task. Dr. von Schuschnigg defined his attitude very clearly from the outset. He said in effect to Herr von Papen: 'Let Germany recognise our independence and undertake not to interfere in our internal affairs; if you can come and tell me that Herr Hitler accepts these conditions, I am prepared to talk to you. These are my essential conditions and I will not depart from them.' Herr von Papen's conversation with the Chancellor or with the Foreign Minister always followed this line, and he was always unable to produce the evidence in writing without which the Austrian Government would not be satisfied. Herr von Papen however remained at his post, continued to smile disarmingly, and bore his constant rebuffs from the Austrian Government and Austrian society with the thickness of skin which is only found in the greater quadrupeds. The events recorded in the preceding paragraph however probably had the effect of making the re-establishment of normal friendly relations with Germany more desirable from the Austrian point of view. So far as the Austrian Cabinet itself was concerned one of the main obstacles to the resumption of these relations was removed when Prince Starhemberg ceased to be a member of the Government on the 13th May. I had the honour to indicate in my despatch No. 169 of the 4th June⁶ that the ensuing government could only be regarded as transitional and that the Chancellor would move either to the right or to the left; the former might involve the admission of some nationally minded members to the Cabinet and would denote a return to the Seipel tradition—'nothing against German, nothing without Germany'. Soundings of both Left and Right took place. The former soon stopped. Herr von Papen moved once more from the wings onto the stage, this time with definite proposals which he said that he was making in the name of his Government. Dr. von Schuschnigg went to Italy and saw Signor Mussolini, who gave his blessing. Conversations between the Chancellor and Herr von Papen then continued and the former was able to inform me on the 30th June that the German attitude was more accommodating; he was at the same time however careful to say that he had no guarantee as yet.

7. The negotiations now proceeded swiftly and on the 7th July the Political Director was able to say that he was hopeful that a settlement would be reached in

⁶ Not printed.

ten days or a fortnight on the lines reported in my telegram No. 53 of that date⁶ which subsequently proved accurate. My information is that it was not until late on that day or on the following morning that the settlement was practically certain. Herr von Papen was able to lay the Agreement before Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on the 10th July—the day on which the Federal Chancellor made the communication reported in my telegram No. 55.⁶ Even at that late hour however Dr. von Schuschnigg was cautious and would not commit himself to say that the settlement was effected. The caution observed at the Federal Chancery was not unjustified. According to my information from a confidential and reliable source, Herr Hitler's discussion with Herr von Papen, Baron von Neurath and Herr von Ribbentrop at Berchtesgaden was a lengthy one and Herr Hitler only finally appended his signature with considerable reluctance. He is said to have remarked to Herr von Papen, 'This is my Canossa.' Herr von Papen travelled by night to Vienna and brought the news to the Federal Chancery on the following morning (Saturday) when the final arrangements were settled for making the announcement that evening. Saturday was chosen in accordance with Herr Hitler's wishes; the Austrian Government had wished to defer the announcement until the following Tuesday or Wednesday. Telegrams were exchanged between the Federal Chancellor and Signor Mussolini, General Gombös and also Herr Hitler, while Dr. Goebbels telephoned his personal congratulations to Herr von Papen with whom he has barely been on speaking terms for some time.

8. I have already had the honour to acquaint you with the terms of the official *communiqué*, of the Federal Chancellor's speech, and of the subsequent official comment.⁶ It will suffice to say here that the German Government have recognised the full sovereignty of the Austrian State and that each government has undertaken not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other; Austria is a German state, but this consideration is not to affect the Rome Protocols or Austria's attitude to her partners, Italy and Hungary; as the desired relief of tension can only take place if definite conditions are fulfilled on both sides, both governments are to take appropriate measures. The points which these measures are to cover are contained in a separate document which, as foreshadowed in my telegram No. 53 of the 7th July, has not been published. Their substance was however given to me verbally by the Political Director on the 13th July as follows.

The Patriotic Front will continue to be the only recognised political organisation in Austria and will undergo no change.

The Austrian Government will grant a general amnesty to political offenders except in the case of those convicted of criminal acts.

No negotiations are to take place with Germany in regard to the return of Austrian emigrants but the question will be closely studied by the Austrian Government and the results communicated to the German Government only with a view to execution.

The present agreement is not consultative: its only object is to bring back Austro-German relations to normal.

Germany's recognition of the independence of Austria as a Federal State and of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Austria is unconditional.

Nazi propaganda in Austria remains forbidden. Austrian National Socialism is purely an Austrian affair.

Any kind of *Anschluss* propaganda will be suppressed.

The restriction on Germans travelling to Austria will be abolished in principle, but for the time being permission will only be granted to those who wish to travel to Austria for family reasons, or for medical or curative treatment (Austrian spas), to commercial travellers, and to those engaged in sport and athletics.

Certain German newspapers will be allowed into Austria and vice versa.

Nazi badges and flags remain forbidden to Austrian nationals. German nationals in Austria, like other foreigners, may show their flags and badges within the limits of the law.

The above covers, I was informed by Herr Horn-bostel, all the points mentioned in the agreement. There is no mention of Restoration.

9. The agreement was generally unexpected by Austrians of all classes. I had the honour to furnish you with my preliminary observations in my telegram No. 606 of the 13th July and further reflection does not lead me to modify what I then said, although subsequent information enables me to amplify it in certain particulars.

10. Some of the reasons which actuated Dr. von Schuschnigg in reaching a settlement which is on the face of it most satisfactory to Austria have been indicated in paragraph 5 above. Herr Hitler's motives will no doubt be more adequately reported by H.M. Representative at Berlin. The explanation of them given by senior officials of the Federal Chancery is that H.M. Government's questionnaire put him in a corner and that he found it necessary to create a diversion and make a parade of his pacific intentions, for what it is worth on paper, by making his peace with the country of his birth. He perhaps saw already that he would have to take some action of this kind when he made his speech in the Reichstag in May 1935. Herr Greiser's unfortunate behaviour at Geneva last week may also have helped.⁷ The Austrian Government feel indeed that they have taken advantage of a psychological moment which might not have recurred. It is also probable that military considerations played an important part in the Führer's decision. So long as Austria remained a bone of contention between Germany and Italy, a clash of arms as the result of Italian intervention in the internal affairs of Austria was always a possibility to be taken into account. Italy can now withdraw her troops from the Brenner and with that the Italo-German military situation returns to normal.

11. By ensuring a friendly Austria on her Southern flank Germany not only gains freedom of action Eastwards but also improves the means of communication with Hungary whose military co-operation in certain eventualities is believed to be an important part of German military plans. Germany will now be in a position to exert a maximum of pressure against Czechoslovakia whose frontier forms a wedge into Germany and is at one point only 95 miles from Berlin. And in the eyes of the German General Staff Czechoslovakia constitutes nothing less than an outpost of Soviet Russia.

12. In connection with the above, it is not without interest that according to a statement made to the Military Attaché by a senior officer at the Federal War Ministry, the Austrian military authorities are not looking to German assistance in the matter of rearmament. They are satisfied that their own armament industry will be able to supply all their requirements, which, in any case, can only be met step by step as funds become available.

⁷ See No. 399, note 3.

13. As to the Italian share in the agreement I have been given the following information by a high official in the Federal Chancery. When Dr. von Schuschnigg saw Signor Mussolini early in June and explained the proposals which had been received from the German side Signor Mussolini said 'I agree in principle, but be careful: examine every point at least twenty times before you agree to it. So far as I am concerned, I will be glad to have my main difference with Germany removed.' No communications on the subject passed between Rome and Berlin but the Federal Chancery sent direct to Count Ciano the result of each day's discussion. So far from Signor Mussolini having tried to influence the Austrian Government during the negotiations he offered no comment on these various papers until he received the final text of the agreement, when he gave it his blessing.

14. Austrian opinion on the agreement of course varies. The combined Revolutionary Socialist and Communist Party is highly incensed and declares that it will continue the struggle against the Fascist Dictatorship. The less extreme Socialists may take a more realist view, but although these elements wish to secure their future existence as a party within the framework of the present Constitution by means of free elections, if and when they may be held, to the Trade Unions it seems unlikely that they will be able to do so. Even among the Socialists there must be many who in their heart of hearts welcome the restoration of friendly relations with Germany. As a body however, their attitude will continue for some time at least to be hostile to the Government. While no doubt the suppression of their subversive activities will continue to be rigorously carried out, the Chancellor is himself likely to lose no opportunity for conciliation on his own familiar and often expressed terms and is credited with the desire of bringing back Dr. Dobretzberger into the Cabinet.

15. The Legitimists were quite taken by surprise and are furious at what they consider the Chancellor's betrayal of his country. One of the leaders made the remark that Dr. von Schuschnigg ought to be put on trial for high treason. The Restoration may however be regarded as quite off the map for the moment. None the less, Legitimist propaganda may be expected to continue to a mild extent at least and in so far as the Government may decide that it is harmless and tolerable; the movement is not, in my view, one which they will wish completely to extinguish.

16. The Jewish element finds itself aligned, though for very different reasons, with the extreme Austrian Nazis in opposition to the settlement. The latter declare that they have again been let down by Herr Hitler as in July 1934. If the settlement is honourably executed on the German side and if Herr Hitler really means to abide by his undertakings these Nazis will have no object in continuing the struggle. But this is perhaps hoping for too much. The Austrian Authorities have already some evidence that he does not mean to play the game. According to the settlement, Austrian Nazis are now at the mercy of the Austrian Authorities and can no longer look to Herr Hitler for help. The more radical section may remain a discontented element and some may find their way into the ranks of the Communists. The moderate Nazis welcome the settlement.

17. Prince Starhemberg's attitude is guided by personal considerations. He is peeved at having played no part in the settlement. He had had the intention of going to Berlin for the Olympiad and opening negotiations himself with the Nazi leaders. Instead, he has had the role of a simple spectator. None the less, no sign of pique appeared in the *communiqué* issued by the leaders of the *Heimatschutz* after

deliberating for two days under Prince Starhemberg's chairmanship. The *communiqué* declared in substance that the *Heimatschutz* welcomed the agreement for the (face-saving) reason that it enabled them in future to devote their energies to the fight against Bolshevism. The rank and file of the *Heimatschutz* in general do seem in fact to approve of the agreement and the Prince's own following has dwindled. The latter may however try to hold together his own followers, whether within the Militia or not, as a separate entity for as long as possible. As you are aware, the Vienna *Heimatschutz* have always been more attached to Major Fey, whose tendencies are definitely Germanophile. The *Heimatschutz* in the Western Provinces, who have generally taken a line independent of Headquarters, will probably be pleased and will see in the settlement a chance for resuscitating in a certain form the pre-war Triple Alliance and the advantage of an anti-Communist bloc.

18. The Military Attaché has found senior officers at the Federal War Ministry reserved and suspicious. They still retain memories of Prussian domineering methods during the War which they would be sorry to see revived. Major Benfield considers that it is too early to say how the settlement will be greeted by the junior officers and by the rank and file.

19. The South Tyrolese are an element which it is always well to bear in mind. They will be pleased at the development in so far as it implies Austro-German cooperation but their pleasure will last in the measure as it results in the alleviation of their lot and assists them in securing their freedom from Italian rule.

20. The elements that support the Government naturally welcome the agreement, some no doubt with reservations and many with doubts of the good faith with which it will be executed on the German side. They no doubt consider it too much to hope that *Anschluss* propaganda will cease entirely. But when all this has been said and the opposition elements analysed it remains, I am convinced, true that the termination of the 'war' is greeted with satisfaction by the majority of the population of the country.

21. An undertone of caution is noticeable in the Austrian press. The Chancellor's 'Weltblatt', after expressing the hope that no incidents will occur in the near future to disturb the newly found harmony, goes on to say that owing to German exchange restrictions economic improvement can only come slowly but on the other hand a cultural revival should come more quickly since all restrictions on art, literature, films and broadcasting will soon disappear; an economic revival in the Danube area should take place in due course. The 'Tagblatt' while of course approving the agreement declares that the memory of years of bitterness cannot be easily extinguished; they have left behind a determination on the part of Austria not to be dislodged from the Dollfuss path. In regard to the section of the press which is very close to the Roman Catholic church, the 'Reichspost' in a self-righteous and exultant article has exhorted the Nazis to give up their anti-national activities in view of the new situation while the 'Linzer Volksblatt' says that although there is no question of a new Triple Alliance a group of reformist states has been formed which favour reform of the League and of the Peace Treaties.

22. Dr. Guido Schmidt, the new State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, whose appointment in view of the Chancellor's many activities is tantamount to that of Foreign Secretary, published a statement on the 15th July in which he pointed out that the conclusion of the settlement corresponded to the universal need for securing peace and especially economic co-operation. Austria, he declared, is now in the

position and has a strong determination to act as an element for binding the peoples together, as a bridge between the West and the East, and between the North and the South. Her successful activity corresponds to the best Austrian traditions and is moreover forced upon her by the protection of her independence as a state. Herr Hitler's speech of a year ago in the German Reichstag had provided the basis for an understanding between the two countries, and Austria's close and friendly relation with Italy and Hungary did not stand in the way. The significance of the Rome Protocols for Austria's general policy would not in any way be disturbed by the new settlement since they were directed against no other State and excluded no other State, but provided a foundation for the extension of peaceful economic and cultural co-operation with other States. When these Protocols were concluded none of the partners had the intention of forming a political block of powers against the German Reich or of excluding the German Reich from the settlement of affairs in Central Europe; such a result moreover, in accordance with the repeated declarations of responsible English and French statesmen, would also not have corresponded to the aims and intentions of the foreign policy of Paris and London. Austria's correct and friendly relations with all states which were determined to observe her independence as well as Austria's relations with the League of Nations, obtained added significance by the normalisation of Austro-German relations. He was convinced that the restoration of friendly, neighbourly relations between the two German States of Europe would also provide a more favourable atmosphere for the international discussions which lay ahead and would thus serve the need of securing universal peace in Europe.

23. The execution of some of the items enumerated in paragraph 7 above will not be free from difficulty. There is clearly room for bickering in regard to the return of Austrian emigrants (members of the Legion), though this is expressly stated to be a purely Austrian affair, and also in regard to the treatment of Austrian Nazis. I learn from a German source that the Austrian Government intend to release 1,300 of the 1,500 Nazis who are now in prison. Are they going to be treated as decent members of the community thereafter? Are the officers and other ranks of the army who were dismissed for Nazi activity to be reinstated or to receive the pensions to which they are entitled? The more accommodating and merciful the Austrian Government shows itself in these matters the more difficult it will be for Herr Hitler not to carry out his side of the bargain. So far as the Austrian Government are concerned they have every intention of observing the agreement in the spirit and in the letter and they gave an earnest of their good intentions at once by the appointment of Dr. Glaise-Horstenau to the Cabinet. This action is regarded by my French colleague as unduly precipitate, though some immediate announcement of this kind was probably demanded by Herr Hitler, if only to show that the settlement was not entirely one-sided. Immediate results in the economic field are perhaps not to be expected in view of the 'clearing' difficulties, though a favourable effect on the investment market in Austria is quite likely. The main items of Austria's exports which will be affected will probably be round wood, cattle for slaughter and for breeding, milk, cheese and pigs, and the cattle trade in the Western Provinces might be rescued from its present precarious position. But the restoration of the German tourist frontier traffic would have an even greater effect and this is apparently not contemplated at present. It is well to remember in this connection that the length of common frontier is over 400 miles.

24. So far as the present is concerned Dr. von Schuschnigg seems to have

achieved a striking success. There are however already indications that the Socialists and extreme Nazis have every intention of continuing their activities. Both have already issued their propaganda sheets this week and it is noteworthy that the Nazi sheet makes no mention whatever of the Austro-German Settlement. There is also some speculation in regard to the concessions that Dr. von Schuschnigg may have made to Herr Hitler in return but I can obtain no confirmation of the existence of any undertakings apart from those already mentioned above.

25. There has been some speculation in the foreign press in regard to Germany's possible adhesion to the Rome Protocols. Hungary has for some time wished this to take place but Austria has opposed. As there is no longer any reason for Austria's opposition the path is now open for Germany. But what advantage would such a step involve from Germany's point of view? Herr Hitler's dislike of entanglement in multilateral arrangements is well known. And, in addition, German economic policy seems to have been successful enough in South Eastern Europe without adventitious aids. There seems therefore no valid reason why Germany should enter the partnership. The danger of a Fascist bloc may not therefore be very real at present, except possibly for purely defensive purposes.

26. My French colleague has taken strong exception to the description of Austria as a 'German State.' This is however the phrase used in the Austrian Constitution and has been constantly used by Dr. von Schuschnigg in his speeches during the last two years. There are Austrians who object to this designation and point out that the mixture of races of which the majority of Austrians are composed makes the title 'German State' inaccurate and misleading. They accept perforce the tie of language but jib at that of consanguinity and assert, as an illustration, that in the two other small countries somewhat similarly situated, a Belgian is a Belgian whether of French or Flemish extraction, and a Swiss is a Swiss whether his language is French, German or Italian. Dr. von Schuschnigg however has always been firm on the point of the 'German State' and has refused to be influenced by the objections which have from time to time been put to him.

27. The Little Entente is, I understand, very pleased that the Restoration bogey has been removed. This applies, for some reason or other, especially to Roumania. The Yugoslav attitude was summed up to me in the words: 'They got a shock but pretend they didn't.' M. Hodza,⁸ I am told, welcomes the Settlement and may look forward to achieving something similar for Czechoslovakia. The Vatican at first had some doubts, but these have been removed by the Austrian Government's explanations and their approval is now complete.

28. Many questions must arise with regard to the further effects of the settlement, as the reception accorded to it in the various countries only too clearly indicates, questions to which it would serve no purpose to attempt an answer pending the further development of Herr Hitler's policy in his relations with the other powers of Europe. For the time being it seems sufficient to record that good relations with Vienna, if they could be established and maintained, must improve the position of Germany in a variety of directions and it is certain that it is on this aspect of the latest developments in Austro-German relations that attention will be concentrated by the watching nations around, many of them possibly not unmindful of the dictum attributed to Prince Bülow—I used the quotation in a despatch some three years ago but do not hesitate to do so again—'La puissance qui dominera Vienne apres la Guerre pourra se vanter de l'avoir gagnée'.

⁸ Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia.

29. I am sending copies of this despatch to H.M. Representatives at Berlin, Budapest, Prague and Rome.⁹

I have, etc.,
(for the Minister)
W. H. B. MACK

⁹ In a minute of July 23 Mr. C. Bramwell, a Second Secretary in the Southern Department, described this as 'a first class despatch . . . and though long it could scarcely have been compressed'.

APPENDIX V

Memorandum by Mr. Somers-Cocks on the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of August 26, 1936¹

[J 7309/2/16]

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 27, 1936

1. *Alliance between the two Countries*

The treaty terminates the military occupation of Egypt by British forces (article 1) and establishes an alliance between the two countries (article 4). It continues for a period of twenty years, after which, if either party so request, both parties will negotiate with a view to revising its terms by agreement in the light of the then existing circumstances. (Negotiations for revision may, if both parties wish it, be entered into at any time after ten years.) Any revision must provide for the continuation of the alliance in accordance with the principles contained in those articles of the present treaty defining the scope of the alliance (article 16). These principles are as follows: Neither party will adopt an attitude or conclude a treaty inconsistent with the alliance (article 5). They will consult each other with a view to peaceful settlement of any dispute with a third State threatening a risk of rupture with that State (article 6). In the event of either party being engaged in war the other will come to its aid as an ally subject to its obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations or the Pact of Paris (article 7, paragraph 1, and article 10). It is provided in advance that the form which Egypt's assistance to His Majesty's Government is to take will be as follows: In the event of war, imminent menace of war or an apprehended international emergency Egypt will accord all the facilities in its power to the United Kingdom, these facilities and this assistance including the use of Egyptian ports, aerodromes, means of communication and all necessary administrative and legislative measures, including the establishment of martial law and an effective censorship (article 7, paragraph 2). Among these facilities will be included facilities for the sending of British forces or reinforcements (Agreed Minute, point (i)).

2. *Protection of the Suez Canal*

Whilst the Suez Canal is an integral part of Egypt, it is stated by the parties to be a universal means of communication and an essential means of communication between the different parts of the British Empire (article 8, paragraph 1). With a view to ensuring in collaboration with the Egyptian forces the defence of the Canal, the United Kingdom is authorised by Egypt to maintain in a zone on the Suez Canal forces not exceeding 10,000 land forces, and air forces not exceeding 400 pilots (annex to article 8, paragraph 1), until such time as the two parties agree that the Egyptian army is capable of ensuring by its own resources the proper and entire security of navigation in the Canal. (These numbers may, however, be increased in the event of war, menace of war or apprehended international emergency (article 7 and annex to article 8, paragraph 1).) At the end of

¹ Cf. No. 483, note 3.

the period of the treaty the question whether the Egyptian army has become capable to do this may, if the high contracting parties do not agree on the point, be submitted to the Council of the League of Nations for decision in accordance with the provision of the Covenant now in force, or to some other person or body agreed upon by the high contracting parties in accordance with any other procedure they may agree to (article 8, paragraph 2).

The Egyptian Government will build in the Canal Zone the additional barracks required for the British troops up to the number indicated above with full amenities and an emergency water supply, according to the requirements of His Majesty's Government (annex to article 8, paragraphs 3, 4 and 5). They will also construct roads, the most important of which are that across the Delta from the Canal Zone to Alexandria and that from the Canal Zone to Cairo, and they will improve the railway facilities in the Canal Zone (annex to article 8, paragraph 6).

When this work has been carried out to the satisfaction of both parties (an arbitral board will be set up to decide disputes—annex to article 8, paragraph 9) His Majesty's forces in Egypt other than those already stationed on the Canal will be withdrawn to the Canal Zone. (This applies to the forces in Cairo, including Abbassia and Helmia in Heliopolis, Helouan and Aboukir, but not to the forces in Alexandria (annex to article 8, paragraph 8).) The forces in Alexandria will remain in their present position for a period not exceeding eight years, which is the time considered necessary for the final completion of new barrack accommodation in the Canal Zone and for the improvement of the roads from Cairo to Suez; from Cairo to Alexandria via Ghiza and the Desert; and from Alexandria to Mersa Matruh in the Western Desert; and for the improvement of railway facilities between Ismailia and Alexandria and Alexandria and Mersa Matruh (annex to article 8, paragraph 18).

There are also three other roads to be built as soon as possible. They are to run from Cairo south along the Nile to Kena and Kus; from Kus to Kosseir and from Kena to Hurgada (annex to article 8, paragraph 7).

3. *Other Military Provisions*

The British air forces are permitted to fly wherever they consider it necessary for purposes of training, reciprocal treatment being accorded to Egyptian air forces in British territories (annex to article 8, paragraph 13), but populated areas will only be flown over when necessity so demands (Agreed Minute, point (x)). Adequate landing grounds and seaplane anchorages will be provided for the British air forces in Egyptian territory and waters and additional ones will be furnished if the British authorities consider this necessary for allied requirements (annex to article 8, paragraph 14).

While British personnel at present with the Egyptian army will be withdrawn, the Egyptian Government in the interests of the alliance will avail themselves of the advice of a British military mission in order to perfect the training of the Egyptian army and air force. His Majesty's Government undertake to provide appropriate training in the United Kingdom for such personnel of the Egyptian forces as the Egyptian Government may wish to send. The armaments and equipment of the Egyptian forces will not differ in type from those of the British forces (Third Note attached to the treaty).

The British forces in Egypt will enjoy immunities and privileges in jurisdictional and fiscal matters (article 9) and these are defined in the special Convention agreed to between the two Governments and published with the treaty.

4. *Sudan*

The administration of the Sudan will continue to be that resulting from the Condominium Agreements of 1899. It is agreed that the primary aim of the administration must be the welfare of the Sudanese; the parties reserve liberty to conclude new conventions regarding the Sudan in the future. The question of the sovereignty of the Sudan is not prejudiced by treaty (article 11, paragraph 1).

The appointments and promotions of officials in the Sudan remain vested in the Governor-General. Where no qualified Sudanese are available the Governor-General will select suitable candidates of British and Egyptian nationality when making new appointments (article 11, paragraph 2). The appointment of Egyptian nationals must be governed by the number of suitable vacancies at the time of their occurrence and the qualifications of the candidates. Promotion will be irrespective of nationality up to any rank by selection, in accordance with the individual merits (Agreed Minute, point xv).

In addition to Sudanese troops, British and Egyptian troops will be placed at the disposal of the Governor-General for the defence of the Sudan (article 11, paragraph 3), and the Governor-General will give immediate consideration, in consultation with an Egyptian military officer of high rank, who will be sent to the Sudan, to the question of the number of Egyptian troops required and the places where they will be stationed (Agreed Minute, point xvi).

Egyptian immigration into the Sudan will continue unrestricted except for reasons of public order and health (article 11, paragraph 4).

In matters of commerce and immigration for the possession of property, there will be no discrimination in the Sudan between British subjects and Egyptian nationals (article 11, paragraph 5).

Financial questions affecting the Sudan are under discussion between the two Governments (Agreed Minute, point xvii).

In a letter from His Majesty's High Commissioner to the president of the Egyptian delegation there are also noted and accepted in principle the suggestions that an Egyptian economic expert should be seconded for service at Khartum; that the Governor-General of the Sudan should appoint an Egyptian officer to his personal staff as military secretary, and that the inspector-general of the Egyptian Irrigation Service in the Sudan should be invited to attend the Governor-General's Council when matters relating to his departmental interests are before the council (Third Note exchanged in Alexandria on the 12th August).

5. *Security of Foreigners and Position of Foreign Officials*

While His Majesty's Government recognise that the responsibility for the lives and property of foreigners in Egypt devolves exclusively upon the Egyptian Government, the Egyptian Government undertake that they will ensure the fulfilment of their obligations in this respect (article 12).

The European Bureau of the Public Security Department will disappear on the ratification of the treaty. But for a further five years a European element will be retained in the Egyptian city police. The city police will remain for the same period under the command of British officers. The services of one fifth of the European police officials will be dispensed with annually (Second Note attached to treaty).

When engaging foreign experts the Egyptian Government will generally prefer British subjects with the necessary qualifications (Second Note attached to treaty).

6. *Capitulations*

His Majesty's Government recognise that the capitulatory regime is no longer in accordance with the spirit of the times and the present state of Egypt (article 13). They agree therefore to support Egypt in an immediate approach to the other Powers with capitulatory rights with a view to agreement on the following points:

- (i) Disappearance of the existing restrictions on Egyptian sovereignty in the matter of the application of Egyptian legislation (including financial legislation) to foreigners.
- (ii) A transitional regime for a reasonable and not unduly prolonged period (to be fixed by agreement) during which the mixed tribunals will remain and will exercise, besides their present judicial jurisdiction, the jurisdiction of the consular courts, which will be transferred to those. At the end of this period the Egyptian Government will be free to dispense with the mixed tribunals (annex to article 13, paragraph 1).

The Egyptian Government undertake that legislation made applicable to foreigners will not be inconsistent with the principles of modern legislation or discriminate against foreigners (annex to article 13, paragraph 6).

For the purposes of the transitional régime of the mixed tribunals, it will be necessary to revise the laws relating to the organisation and jurisdiction of the tribunals and to issue a new code of criminal procedure. The revision would include amongst other things an increase of the personnel of the mixed tribunals and modification of the procedure in the case of pardons or remissions of sentences imposed on foreigners, as also that in connexion with the execution of capital sentences passed on foreigners (annex to article 13, paragraph 8).

7. *Remaining Clauses*

The two parties will each be represented in the capital of the other by an Ambassador (article 2) and as His Majesty The King and Emperor will be the first foreign sovereign to be represented in Egypt by an Ambassador, British Ambassadors will be considered senior to other foreign diplomatic representatives in that country (First Note annexed to treaty).

Egypt will apply for membership of the League of Nations and her application will be supported by His Majesty's Government in the conditions prescribed by article 1 of the Covenant (article 3).

The rights and obligations of both parties under the Covenant or the Pact of Paris are not prejudiced by the treaty (article 10).

Any difference regarding the application or interpretation of the provisions of the treaty which the parties cannot settle by direct negotiation will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the League Covenant (article 15).

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